

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
C. ARTHUR PEARSON

(OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 439.

FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 29TH, 1897.

[ONE PENNY.]

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SHORT STORIES

No. 439.]

[ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending May 29th, 1897.

MEN WHO HAVE MADE THE EMPIRE.

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

FOREWORD.

THE Epic of England has yet to be written. It may be that the fulness of time for writing it has not come yet, or it may be that Britain is still waiting for her Homer and her Vergil. Perhaps the matured genius of a Rudyard Kipling, that strong, sweet Singer of the Seven Seas, may some day address itself to the accomplishment of this most splendid task, and perhaps it is his only to sound the prelude. That is a matter for the gods to decide in their own good time, but this much is certain: that when this work has been worthily done the world will hear echoing through the ages such a thunder-song as has never stirred human hearts before.

It will begin, doubtless, with the battle-cries of the old Sea-Kings of the North, chanted to the music of their churning oars and the rush and roar of the foam swirling away under the bows of their longships, and from them it will go on ringing and thundering through

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the centuries, ever swelling in depth and volume as more and more of the races of men hear it rolling over the battle-fields of conquered lands, until at last—as every loyal man of English speech must truly hope—the roar of the Last Battle has rolled away into eternal silence, and north and south, east and west, the proclaiming of the Pax Britannica heralds the epoch of “The Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World.”

But in the meantime, while we are waiting for the coming of the singer whose master-hand shall blend the song and story of Britain into an epic worthy of his magnificent theme, materials may be gathered together, old facts may be presented in new lights, and the great characters who have played their parts in the most tremendous drama that has ever occupied the Stage of Time may be re-grouped in such fashion as will make their subtler relationships more plain, and all this will make the great work readier to the hand of the Master when he comes.

It is a portion of this minor work that I have set myself here to do. The making of a nation and the building of nations up into empires is, humanly speaking, the greatest and noblest work that human hands and brains can find to do, for the making of an empire means, in its ultimate analysis, the substitution of order for anarchy, of commerce for plunder, of civilisation for savagery—in a word, of peace for strife.

Now, the British Empire as it stands to-day is unquestionably the greatest moral and material fact in human history, and hence it is permissible to assume that the makers of it must, each in his own way, whether of peace or war, have been the greatest empire-builders the world has yet seen, and it is my purpose here to take the greatest of these and tell with such force and vividness as I may, the story of the man and his work. I am not going to write a series of biographies arranged in prim chronological ranks, nor am I going to confine myself to the narration of collated facts so dear to the hearts of educational inspectors and scholastic examiners. Such you will find already cut and dried for you in the school-books and in many ponderous tomes, from the reading of which may your good taste and good sense deliver you!

I shall seek rather to show you the living man doing the living work which his destiny called him to do. The man will not always be found of the best, nor the work, seemingly, of the noblest, but what I shall seek to show you is that the work *had* to be done that a certain end might be accomplished, and that the man who did it was, all things considered, the best and, it may be, the only man to do it. In so far as I do not do this I shall have failed in the doing of my own work.

One more word seems necessary in order to anticipate certain possible misconceptions. Our empire-making is not yet complete, even at home. The centuries of strife during which the hammering and welding together of the nations which now make up the United Kingdom has been progressing, have naturally and necessarily left certain national jealousies and antipathies behind them, and the last thing that I should desire would be to arouse any of these.

There are two kinds of patriotism, a smaller and a greater, a National and an Imperial. Both are equally good and noble, and it is necessary that the first should precede the second. But it is equally necessary that it should not supersede or obscure it, and it is to this later and greater, this Imperial patriotism that I shall appeal, and I would ask my readers, whatever their nationality, to remember that on the burning plains

of India and the rolling prairies of Canada, in the vast expanses of the Australian Bush and the African Veld, there are neither Englishmen nor Scotsmen, Welshmen nor Irishmen; but only Citizens of the Empire, brothers in blood and speech, and fellow-workers in the building up of the noblest and stateliest fabric that human hands have ever reared or God's sun ever shone upon.

I.—WILLIAM THE NORMAN.

Pirate and Nation-Maker.

IT may strike those of my readers who have only got their history from their school-books as somewhat strange that I should begin my record of British Empire-Makers with a man whom they have been taught to look upon as a foreigner, an invader, a conqueror, and a ruthless oppressor of the English.

The answer is simple, though manifold. The school-books are only filled with potted facts and are therefore wrong and unreliable. It has been well said that England was made on the shores of the Baltic Sea and the German Ocean. The so-called Englishmen who occupied it at the time of the Conquest were not Englishmen at all, for the simple reason that the true English race had yet to be born, and, after it, the true British.

The England and Scotland of the eleventh century were peopled, not by nations, but by tribes mostly at bitter and constant war with each other. There were still Jutes and Angles, Picts and Scots, Danes and Swedes and Norwegians, each occupying their own little stretch of country, and governed, more or less ineffectually, by their chieftains, in proof of which it is enough to recall the fact that Harold's last fight but one was against his own brother, who had come across the Narrow Seas at the head of a miscellaneous crowd of hungry pirates to steal as much as he could of the ownerless heritage that Edward the Confessor had left behind him.

A good deal of sentiment, more or less born of deftly-written romances, has glorified the memory of this same Harold. Whether it was deserved or not does not concern us now, any more than does his right or unright to the throne of England. It is enough here to grant him all honour as an able leader of armies, and a man who knew how to snatch victory from defeat, and glory from disaster, by dying like a hero surrounded by the corpses of his foes.

The idle question whether he or William had the better right to the crown of England may be left to those who care for such quibbling. Let us, at the outset, in the words of the Sage of Chelsea, “clear our minds of cant.” There is no “right” or “wrong” in these things, saving only the eternal right of the strongest and wisest—the fittest or most suitable, in short, to wield power and dominion whether the less fit like it or not. The peoples are thrust headlong into the fiery crucible of War, and, on the adamant anvil of Destiny, the Thor's Hammer of Battle beats and crushes them into the shape that God has designed for them. It seems a rude method, but in many thousands of years we have found no other, so at least we may conclude that it is the best one known.

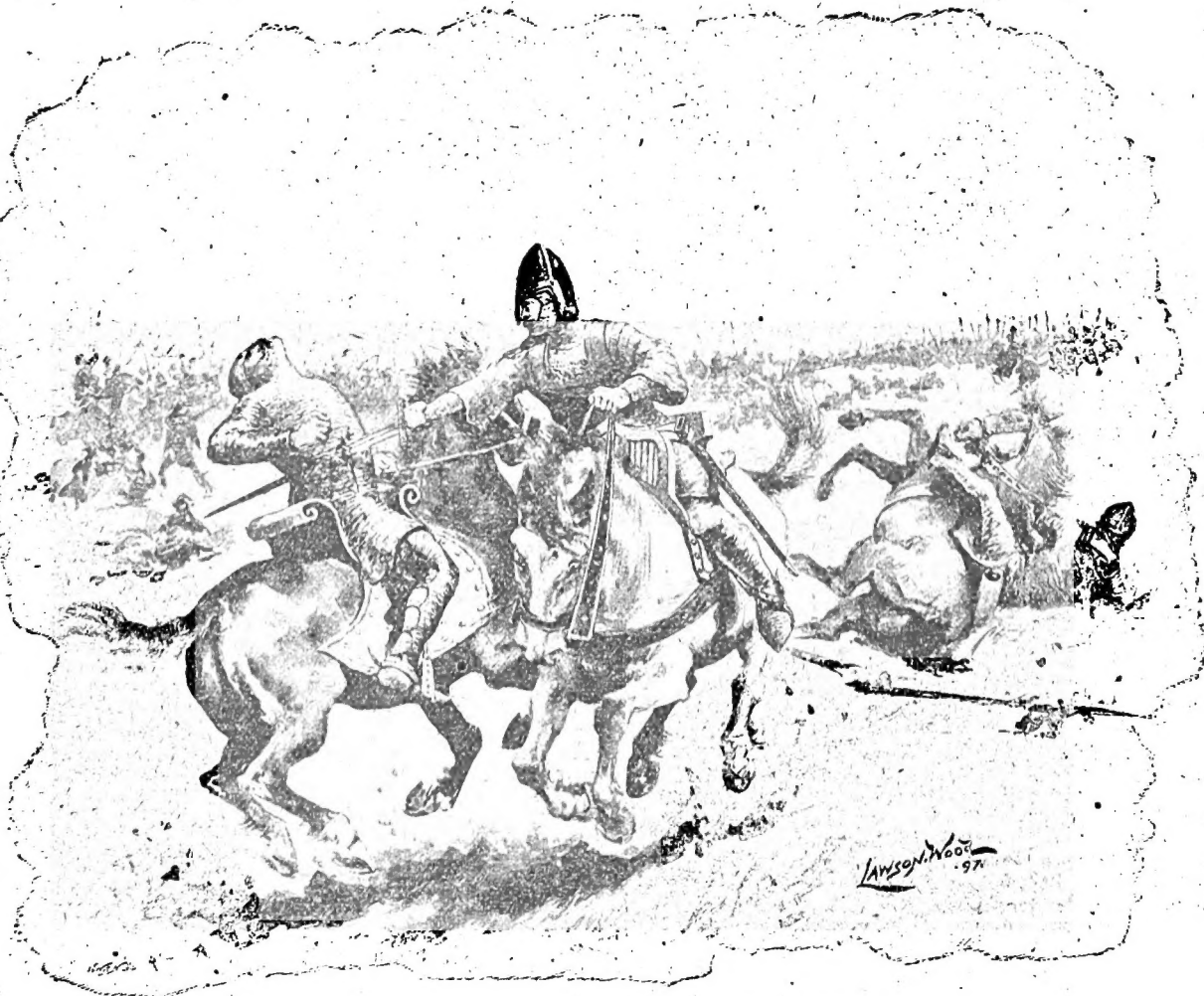
There is a very deep meaning in the seemingly flippant and almost impious saying of Napoleon: “God fights on the side of the biggest battalions.” He does—but you

must reckon the bigness of the battalions, not only by their numbers, but by the value of their units, remembering always that one man with a stout heart and a cause he honestly believes in is worth a score who have neither heart nor faith.

Just such a man was William the Norman, son of Robert the Magnificent, otherwise styled the Devil, and Arlette the Fair, daughter of Fulbert the Tanner of

held on to; and that is why he became the first of our Empire-Makers.

No doubt it was the strain of the old pirate blood which ran so strongly in his veins that made him this. If we have successfully cleared our minds of cant, we shall see plainly that, since all nations begin in piracy of some sort, it is natural to expect that the best pirates will prove the best Empire-Makers. That old strain is,



Drove the good steel through mail and flesh and bone.

Falaise. It is in this birth of his that we find the first clue to his real greatness. He was born of a union unhallowed by the sanction of the Church, among a people proud beyond all modern belief of their royal sea-king ancestry.

How did he come to achieve this almost miraculous triumph over a prejudice and hostility of which we can now form but little idea of?

We have to look no farther than his cradle to find the answer. Lying there, the little fellow used to grasp the straw in his baby fists with such a grip that it could not be pulled away from him. The straw broke first, and ever after what William the Norman laid hold of he

happily, not yet exhausted. When it is, Great and Greater Britain will be no more.

Few men have passed unscathed through such a stormy youth as his was. When he was seven years old his father, Duke Robert, having exacted an oath of unwilling fealty from his under-lords to his bonny but base-born heir, went away on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, from which he never returned, leaving him to the wardship of his friend, Alan of Brittany, and soon after Duke Robert's death was known Alan was poisoned. After that for a dozen years the Boy Duke was in constant peril of his life.

One night two lads were lying sleeping side by side in

the Castle of Vaudreuil, and in the silence and darkness of the night one of the Montgomeries, bitter enemies of the Lords of Falaise, to whose hate Alan of Brittany had already fallen a victim, crept up to the bed-side with a naked dagger and drove it blindly into the heart of one of the boys and fled.

Young Duke William—he was only a lad of twelve then—woke up to find himself wet with his playmate's blood, but all unknowing then how nearly the history of the world had come to being changed by that foul and happily misdirected dagger stroke. Had it found his heart instead there would have been no Norman Conquest, no blending of the two strains of blood from which has sprung the Imperial Race of earth, no British Empire, no United States of America—without all of which the world would surely have been very different.

Seven more years of plot and intrigue, of strife and turmoil young Duke William lived through after this, growing ever keener in mind and stronger in body, and, as we may well believe, hardening into the incarnation of ruthless and yet wisely-directed Force which was so soon to make him a power among men. Before he was twenty he shot his arrows from a bow which no other man in his dukedom could bend, and he was already a finished knight, a pattern of the gentleman of his age, good horseman, good swordsman, gentle towards women and stern towards men, pure in his morals and moderate in his living, a good Christian according to his lights and the idea of his day, and above all faithful to the ideals that he had set before himself.

Already at nineteen—that is to say in the year 1044—not only had he shaped his plans for reducing the disorder of his turbulent dukedom to discipline, but he had made his designs so manifest that the lawless lords and robber barons could see for themselves how stern a master he would make—as in good truth he did—and the deadly work of conspiracy started afresh. One night when he was sleeping in his favourite castle of Valognes, Golet, his court-fool, came hammering at his bedroom door with his bauble, crying out that some traitor had let the assassins into the stronghold. He leapt out of bed, huddled on a few clothes as he ran to the stable, mounted his horse, and galloped away all through the night toward Falaise along a road which is called the Duke's Road to this day. No sooner was he safe across the estuary of the Orne and Vire and in the Bayeux district than he pulled his dripping, panting horse up in front of the church of St. Clement, dismounted and knelt down to say his prayers and thank God for his merciful deliverance. Such was the youth who was father to the man justly styled William the Conqueror.

It was not long after this that the years of intrigue and plotting ended in armed revolt. Guy of Burgundy, William's kinsman and once his playmate, looked with greedy eyes on the fair lands of Normandy. He was master of many provinces already, and among his hosts of friends there were not a few of William's own under-lords in whose breasts still rankled the shame of owning a bastard for their master. To his side came the Viscount of Coutance, Randolph of Bayeux, Hamon of Thorigny and Creully, and that Grimbald of Plessis whose hand was to have slain William that night in Valognes, and in the end this long-gathering storm burst on the grassy slopes of Val-ès-Dunes.

Master Wace the Chronicler, in his "Roman de Rou," gives us a brilliant little picture of that long-past scene where the future Conqueror won his spurs—of many a brave and gallant gentleman clad *cap-à-pie* in shining

mail, seated on mighty chargers impatiently pawing the ground, of long lances gay with fluttering ribbons tied on by dainty hands that morning, of waving plumes and flaunting pennons, and mild-eyed cattle grazing knee-deep in the long wet grass in peaceful ignorance of the bloody work that was about to be done.

But with all this we have little to do, and one episode must suffice. The starkest warrior among the rebels was Hardrez, Lord of Bayeux, and he, like many another, had sworn to slay William that day with his own hands. The oath had proved fatal to others before it did to him, but at length his turn came. Young Duke William saw him from afar, and with lance in rest made for him at a gallop. One of the knights who had followed Hardrez to battle charged at him in mid-course. The next moment horse and man went rolling in the grass, and William, dropping his splintered lance, drew his sword, and, the Lord of Bayeux coming up at the instant, he drove the good steel with one shrewd, strong thrust through mail and flesh and bone, and Hardrez never spoke again.

That stroke won William his dukedom, and the Chronicler, though a man of Bayeux himself, tells in stirring lines how the young lord and his faithful knights hunted the flying rebels off the field and rode them down like sheep.

This was not the last fight that William had for the mastery of his own land, but it left his hands free to begin the work that he had set himself to do, and he did it. To him unity was strength, and he was ready to go to any lengths to get it. His methods then, as afterwards in England, were severe—we should call them brutal nowadays, but these days are not those.

When the citizens of Alençon defied him they indulged in the pleasantry of hanging raw hides over the walls and beating them, shouting out the while that here there was plenty for the tanner's son to do. He set his teeth and swore his favourite oath—by the Splendour of God—that they should have work enough ere he had done with them. When the city lay at his mercy he had two-and-thirty of the humourists sent out to him and cut off their ears and noses and hands and feet and had them tossed over the walls as a sort of hint that he was not quite the kind of person who could appreciate jokes about his ancestors. It was an inhuman deed, but history records no other public aspersions of the good name of Duke William's mother.

Yet one more battle the young Duke had to fight before he crossed the Narrow Seas to the famous field of Senlac. Henry of France, his titular over-lord, and Geoffrey of Anjou, jealous of the fast-growing power of Normandy, united their forces in an expedition which was half an invasion and half a plundering raid. Duke William, with infinite patience and a quiet, marvellous self-restraint, held his own fiery temper and the angry ardour of his knights in check, watching the invaders burn town after town and village after village, and turning some of his fairest domains into a wilderness.

He never struck a blow until, one fatal afternoon, he swooped down from Falaise and caught the French army severed in two by the rising flood of the river Dive. Then he struck, and struck hard, and when the bloody work was over, Henry was glad to buy a truce and his liberty from his vassal with the strong castle of Tillières and all its lands, and so heavy-hearted was he at his defeat that, as the Chronicler tells us, "he never bore shield or spear again."

Normandy had now become the most orderly and best governed country in Europe. Robbers, noble and

*Hanging raw hides over the walls
and beating them.*



otherwise, were ruthlessly suppressed, and the poorest possessed their goods in peace, while William himself had time to turn his thoughts, to gentler and yet not less important matters of policy and love-making.

The old story of his courtship of the fair Matilda of Flanders, with a riding whip is evidently a myth manufactured by some Saxon enemy, for Duke William was in the first place a gentleman, and, moreover, the lady and her parents were as anxious as he was for the marriage, for he was now the most desirable of suitors. The truth is that the Church opposed their union on some shadowy grounds of consanguinity, and it did not take place until after a courtship of four years.

And now, having got our Pirate Duke happily married and seen him undisputed lord of his own realm, we may go with him to St. Valery on the coast of Ponthieu, and watch him working and praying and offering gifts at the old shrine, during those fifteen long days that he watched the weathercocks and prayed for the south wind that was to waft his fleet and army over to the English shore.

It was on Wednesday the 27th of September that the wind at last veered round. The eager soldiery hailed the change as the granting of their prayers and the consent of Heaven to the beginning of their enterprise, and flung themselves into their ships like a great host of schoolboys setting out on a holiday. Soon the grey sea was covered with a swarm of craft, and it must have seemed as though the old Viking days had come back as the great square sails went up to the mast-heads and the shining shields were hung along the bulwarks.

William himself, in his golden ship *Mora*, the present of his own dear Duchess, led the way with the sacred banner of the Pope at his mast-head and the three Lions of Normandy floating astern. The *Mora* was lighter heeled or lighter loaded than the rest, for when morning

dawned she was alone on the sea with the coast of Kent in plain sight. But presently a great forest of masts and clouds of gaily-coloured sails rose up out of the grey waters astern, and the whole vast fleet came on, urged by oar and wind, and by nine o'clock that morning the fore-foot of the *Mora*, close followed by her consorts, struck the English ground in Pevensey Bay.

It has often been told how William, as he landed, stumbled and fell on his hands and knees, and how those near him cried out that it was a fatal omen. The story may be myth or fact, but nothing could be more characteristic of the true man than his springing to his feet with both hands full of sand and laughing out in that great voice of his:

"Nay, by the Splendour of God, not so. See! Have I not taken seizin of my new kingdom and lawful heritage?"

But the army of the so-called English that they had come to seek was nowhere to be found, and some days were spent in uncertainty and debate as to whether they should march on London or await battle on the shore with their sea communications open, and in the end they took the latter and the wiser course.

Meanwhile, as has been said, Harold was away in the North fighting and conquering his brother Tostig and his fellow robbers, and the news of Duke William's landing was flying northward to him. It must have been something of an anxious time for both—the Norman waiting day after day in that deadly inaction which is most fatal of all things to the courage and discipline of an army, and Harold hurrying southward at the head of his victorious troops, knowing that he was about to try conclusions with the best leader and the finest soldiery in Europe.

It is of little import here and to us now which of them had the best right, as the lawyer-quibble has it, to that which they were about to fight for. The point

is that such claims as either had they were going to submit to the stern and final ordeal of battle—and in good truth a stern ordeal it proved to be.

As he came to the South the standard of Harold—the Fighting Man—was joined by troops of recruits attracted by the fame of his northern victory, and it was a great and really formidable army which at length assembled between London and the Kentish coast. Meanwhile the Normans, after the fashion of the pitiless warfare of those days, were dividing their time between the building of entrenched camps and ravaging, plundering, and burning throughout the pleasant Kentish land.

Of course messages and parleys passed between them. Harold from his royal house at Westminster bade Duke William come and fight him for his capital and his kingdom, to which Duke William warily replied: "Come and drive us into the sea if you can!" This at length King Harold was forced to attempt. And so it came to pass that, at length, on the 14th of October, the hosts of the Saxon and the Norman confronted each other on the field of Senlac by Hastings, on the morrow to strike blows whose echoes were to ring through many a long century, and to do deeds more mighty in their effects than either Harold or William dreamt of.

The Norman host has been called a horde of mailed robbers and cut-throats, eager only for plunder, and the Saxon army has been almost canonised as a band of heroes, gathered together to die in defence of their native land and their lawful king. Yet, strangely enough, the robbers and cut-throats spent the best part of the night confessing their sins and praying for victory, as well as in making the best dispositions to attain it. The patriots spent the same hours feasting and drinking, and swaggering to each other about the brave deeds they had done in the North and the greater things they were going to do on the morrow.

So the night passes, and the morning dawns grey and chill on the two now silent hosts. Then, from the Norman ranks rises the solemn cadence of the *Te Deum*, and as this dies away the archers move out—forerunners of those stout yeomen whose clothyrd shafts were one day to win Crécy and Agincourt. Then came the footmen with their long pikes, and after them the mailed and mounted knights, in front of whom rides Taillefer—Iron-Cutter and Minstrel—tossing his sword into the air and catching it, and singing the while the Song of Roland and Roncesvalles. As the archers and pikemen spread out in skirmishing order he sets spurs to his horse and charges at the Saxon line. He kills two men and then goes down under the battleaxe of a third.

Then the arrows flew fast and thick, and charge after charge was made upon the palisades of stakes that fenced the Saxon position, high above which floated the Dragon Standard of Wessex and the banner of the Fighting Man.

But the double-bladed Saxon axes were no playthings, and they were swung by strong and strenuous arms, and every time the Norman front came up to the breastwork it was hewn down in swathes by the deep-biting blades. The arrows fell blunted and broken on the big Saxon shields and stout Saxon armour, and so Duke William, with that ever-ready resource of his, bade his archers

shoot up into the air, and then down from the grey sky there fell a rain of whirling, steel-pointed shafts, one of which, winged by Fate, struck gallant Harold in the eye—doubtless as he was looking up wondering at this new manœuvre—and, piercing his brain, laid him lifeless in the midst of his champions.

Soon after this a cry went up that Duke William too was dead, and he, hearing this, tore off his helmet, a somewhat unsafe thing to do in such a fight, and roared out that he was alive, swearing—as usual by the Splendour of God—that the land of England should yet be his by nightfall.

So they laid on again. William's horse went down under a pike-thrust. He clove the pike-man to the chin and asked one of his knights to lend him his horse. The knight refused, thinking more of his skin than his loyalty, whereupon William pitched him out of the saddle, swung himself up and led another charge against the ever-dwindling ring of heroes who were still hammering away with their battle-axes—and this time the stout line wavers and breaks, the mail-clad warriors pour up the slope, shouting that the day is won; axe and sword ring loud and fast on helm and mail, the Saxons reel back, closing round the body of their king and the staff of his banner.

"*Dex aide! Dex aide! Ha-Rou! Ha-Rou!*"

Duke William's men yell and roar again as they scramble over heaps of mangled corpses filling the trenches and blocking the breaches in the palisades. Another moment or two of brief, bitter, and bloody struggle and the last Saxon ring breaks and melts away, and Hastings and England are won.

What followed is history so familiar that few words more from me will suffice. What Duke William had done in his own land he did after the same methods in the land that had been the Saxons'. Cruel, bloody and savage they were beyond all doubt, but it is a question whether, even in the doing, they were more disastrous than the ferocious anarchy and the unceasing plunder and outrage and murder that had disgraced the weak and divided rule of the Saxon kings. In their effect they were a thousandfold better. Duke William believed that order was Heaven's first law, and, by whatever means he had at hand, he was honestly determined to make it earth's as well. And he succeeded, which after all is not an unsatisfactory test of honest merit. How well he did so let us ask not one of his own chroniclers or troubadours, but the man who wrote the story of his own conquered people, and this is what he will tell us:

"Truly he was so stark a man and wroth that no man durst do anything against his will. Bishops he set off their bishoprics, and abbots off their abbeys and thanes in prison. And at last he did not spare his brother Odo. Him he set in prison. Betwixt other things we must not forget the good peace that he made in this land, so that a man that was worth aught might travel over the kingdom unhurt with his bosom full of gold. And no man durst slay another though he had suffered never so mickle evil from the other."

Such was this grim, stern, Thor's-Hammer of a man, who by his strength and cunning hewed into shape that which in after days was to become the corner-stone of the glorious, world-shadowing fabric which we call the British Empire.

("Edward Longlegs" next week.)





A TALE OF THE TIME OF RICHELIEU.

"SPEAK! Let me know the worst!"

The Countess of Armile fell back in her chair with a gesture of despair. Her daughter, Isabelle, and the Abbé de Rainy stood by her, endeavouring to afford some consolation in this dark hour. The young man whom she had addressed stood before her, hesitating to say the words which should fill both mother and daughter with anguish.

"Dear aunt," he said at last, "I would not permit anyone else to convey this news; but now that the moment has come for me to fulfil this sad duty, my heart fails me. My unfortunate uncle has been found guilty of treason and sentenced"—he hesitated and then added—"to death."

A groan escaped from the lips of the Countess. Isabelle turned paler, but made no sound.

"He made no defence," continued the young man. "There is some mystery about his strange silence. It is incomprehensible." He was about to continue when the priest stopped him.

"The Countess can bear no more now," he exclaimed. "Leave us, and communicate to your cousin in another room the details of the trial."

At a sign from the Abbé, Isabelle followed her cousin into an adjoining room.

Once out of sight and hearing of her mother, Isabelle gave way to her pent-up feelings and wept bitterly. Henri tried to comfort his fair cousin, but he was forced to wait until the paroxysm was over.

"Oh, Henri," she exclaimed in broken accents. "They will kill my father!"

"I have an important message from him for you," was his reply. He felt that he could do nothing to alleviate her sorrow, which almost unnerved him. He hoped that his words would have the effect of distracting her attention somewhat, and he was not disappointed.

"What is it, Henri? Tell me! Quick!" She took a step forward and, placing her hand upon his shoulder, looked at him entreatingly.

"I saw your father and was able to speak to him for a few seconds; I saw him as they brought him from the torture chamber."

A shudder ran through Isabelle's frame at the last words.

"He was lying on the cold stones," continued Henri,

"and his guards left him for a while alone. I slipped to his side and spoke to him."

"My poor father!"

"This is what he said: 'Henri, listen! The secret which I have suffered so much to keep would become known if my enemies obtained possession of a certain letter. I was reading that letter—I had just finished it—when the officers came to arrest me. I had no time to destroy it; all I could do was to drop it quickly into Isabelle's jewel-case and shut the lid down. Tell my daughter that I command her, as she loves me, whether she has read it or not, to burn that letter. I am dying to preserve the secret which it contains.'"

"A letter in my jewel-case!" said Isabelle wonderingly. "I have not opened the case since my father was arrested. What can it mean?"

"I feel that it contains proof of your father's innocence, but for some reason, he wishes the contents of the letter to remain unknown," replied her cousin.

"Can nothing be done to save my father?" cried Isabelle, her tears flowing afresh.

"There is only one chance," said Henri dubiously, "and that is but a poor one. The Cardinal is coming into this town to-night. A word from Richelieu would save him. Can that word be obtained from him? I fear not. This conspiracy of the Duke de Montmorency, had it succeeded, would have overthrown the Cardinal, so he is not likely to forgive anyone who took part in it."

"I will try to get an audience with him," exclaimed Isabelle, a ray of hope lighting up her pale features. "Can you think of any way of helping me, Henri?"

"There is a man who might be able to assist me," replied the young fellow. "I will go to him and see what he says."

"Yes, yes! Go at once!" said Isabelle eagerly.

Henri lifted his cousin's hand to his lips, and hurried from the room without uttering another word.

Left to herself, Isabelle stood for a second with her hand up to her forehead as though trying to collect her thoughts; then she remembered the message delivered by Henri, and ran into the drawing-room, where the case had remained untouched, forgotten, since the day of the Count's arrest, when she had locked it. She hastily opened it. There lay the letter as it had been dropped on the jewels.

Her father had said "whether she has read it or not." Then he thought she had most probably read it. Would it be a breach of honour to read it now? It contained a secret which might save his life; why should she not save him? The temptation was a strong one; she hesitated—and then read the letter.

It was from the Duke of Montmorency, and it clearly proved her father's innocence, but it implicated several important personages who were not suspected.

It was a reply to a letter written by the Count, urging the Duke to give up his "mad project, in which I will take no part." Her father's very words were quoted. Then the Duke tried to persuade the Count to alter his decision, and mentioned the names of those highly-placed persons who were secretly ready to assist. Now she understood her father's silence; he refused to purchase his life by destroying others whose names had been given to him in confidence. What could she do? Nothing! She could not make use of the letter, yet it proved that her father had not taken part in the conspiracy. Her brain reeled; she staggered to a chair and sank into it in a swoon.

How long she remained in that unconscious condition she knew not. Strange sounds reached her in a dreamy fashion; gradually they became more distinct, and consciousness came back with a rush. She sprang up to find herself face to face with a young officer and half-a-dozen soldiers. The officer held something in his hand, which he was about to read; a pang of fear shot through her heart as she recognised the fatal letter.

"That letter belongs to me!" she exclaimed, in as calm a tone as she could assume, holding out her hand. "I was not aware that it was part of the duty of an officer to read private letters which he might find in houses he entered so unceremoniously as you appear to have entered this residence."

"I have authority for entering this house," replied the officer, flushing. "And I am here in search of a letter."

Isabelle had great difficulty in keeping her composure. The existence of the letter was known—or at least suspected. A thought flashed across her mind. If she allowed the letter to be taken, her father would be saved. But at what a cost! And she would be guilty of a base act of treachery if she let it go without doing her utmost to prevent it. Her doubts were quickly dispelled; her duty was clear and she must do it—even at the cost of her father's life!

"That letter is mine; return it to me!" she said in a tone of command. And as he still hesitated, she stepped forward and deftly drew it from between his fingers before he was aware of it.

Isabelle breathed again; the letter was safe and had not been read. The officer's face clouded angrily at being thus balked in front of his men. Isabelle expected that he would try to regain possession of the letter or make a strict search for the one he had come to find, but to her delight and surprise, he uttered a sharp word of command to his men, and all marched from the room.

Cardinal Richelieu paced up and down the spacious apartment, while his secretary waited for him to begin. It was a favourite amusement of the great Minister, when State affairs were running smoothly, to turn his attention to literature and write some treatise or dissertation. The discovery of the conspiracy initiated by the Duke of Montmorency, and the punishment of

the Duke and his accomplices, had cleared the political atmosphere, and the Cardinal was busy with a drama, the subject of which he regarded as a splendid conception.

"Where was I when that fellow disturbed me with his story about the letter?" he asked. "Oh! I know! I fear he has upset my train of thought; there may be something in that letter after all."

But the Cardinal was doomed to be interrupted that morning. He had scarcely begun to dictate when a servant announced that the daughter of the Count of Armile begged an audience of him on a matter of great importance. The great man frowned.

"Show her in here," he said, after reflecting for a few seconds.

Two minutes later Isabelle entered, followed by Henri.

"Monseigneur," stammered Isabelle, her carefully prepared speech taking wings as she found herself confronted by the powerful Cardinal, "my father is innocent." She could say no more; her heart was too full.

"Your father was a friend of the Duke of Montmorency," said the Cardinal after sharply scrutinising the condemned man's daughter. "He received a letter which he wished to have destroyed—gaolers sometimes have sharp ears. That letter was from the Duke."

Isabelle's heart sank. The officer had recognised the handwriting. Her father's fate was certain unless she produced the letter, but that meant betrayal of the Duke's unsuspected friends. It was a terrible trial; the Count's life was at stake, she could prove his innocence, yet—

"Monseigneur! That letter proves that he is not guilty of taking part in this conspiracy. As you are powerful, spare him. Let me die in his stead. Oh, have pity, have pity!" cried Isabelle, falling on her knees before him.

"If you have proof of his innocence, produce it!" said the Cardinal coldly.

"It is here." Scarcely knowing what she did, the girl arose and drew the letter from her pocket. As she held it towards Richelieu, the face of her father seemed to rise before her eyes and she remembered.

"No!" she exclaimed, drawing back her outstretched hand. "I cannot show it! I will be true to my father, even though it cost him his life!"

She walked to the fire and threw the letter on the flaming logs. All present watched it as the flames devoured it. Then, with a heavy heart, Isabelle saluted the Cardinal and turned to go.

"Stay!" commanded Richelieu. "You are a heroine such as I am trying to portray in my drama. My secretary says that such a one is not to be found in all France, but you have proved the truth of my conception. I believe your story and I will pardon your father!"

Unheeding the incoherent words with which Isabelle tried to express her thanks, Cardinal Richelieu sat down at the table and wrote a few words on a sheet of paper, which he handed to Henri, who was endeavouring to calm his cousin.

"Take her away and see that she has every attention," he said in a kindly tone. "And tell the Count of Armile not to meddle in conspiracies against the State."

With a motion of his hand he waved them away. As they left the apartment in bewilderment he turned to his secretary, and, with a gleam of triumph in his eyes, said:

"Who is right—you or I? Now I can go on."

GEO. DAY.

A PARDONABLE SIN.

SIR ROBERT MELTON sat at the writing-table which had belonged to his dead wife. In his hand was a paper, slightly yellow with age, which he was reading for the hundredth time; a letter, written on a delicate kind of note-paper which he had never used. It was dated ten years previously, addressed to his wife and signed "Lionel."

He had been seated in that position for over an hour, a look of intense anguish on his handsome face, convulsively clutching the missive with one hand while the other was pressed against his forehead.

What was the meaning of this letter, which, judging by the piece of silk ribbon found attached to it, was not the only one received from the writer?

His wife had been dead two weeks only. The day before her death she had been found insensible on the floor, close to this writing-table. Letters and papers were strewn about the floor, as if she had hurriedly sought for something, and there was a smell of burning. She had left her death-bed—for everyone knew that her case was hopeless, and she herself had perceived it by the doctor's earnest manner—and had made her way into this (an adjoining) room, where she had been discovered insensible.

The next day she had passed away with strange words on her lips, crying that she heard sweet music as she had heard it years before, talking of her child—their union had never been so blessed—and calling: "Lionel."

He had taken it for delirium; all of it. And now, on looking over her knick-knacks, performing a last labour of love, he had drawn from the back of a drawer, where it had slipped and remained hidden, this—love letter?

Had her eight years of married life been one long lie? No, no! He could not believe it! Yet—? Once more he read the letter:

MARGARET,—The child is dead. The last link between us is broken. I am sick unto death and shall soon follow the little one. Then you will be free.—LIONEL.

At the bottom of the sheet was a piece of music; was it the music that his wife had spoken about? Was this child hers? Who was this Lionel? Oh, what horrible mystery was this?

A thought struck him. He went to the piano and tried to play the bars of music written at the end of the letter. At first he could not find the right keys, although he was a good musician; he struck the wrong ones and produced wild discords. But at length he mastered his feelings sufficiently, and played it correctly. A weird piece of composition; sad and melancholy, it pictured the last moments of a human creature in such a vivid manner that Sir Robert shuddered and hastily snatched up the letter and quitted his seat. Whoever composed that work, for he was convinced that it was but a fragment of a masterpiece, was a genius. And he was Margaret's lover? What else could he think? He walked up to her portrait and gazed at it.

"No, Margaret!" he exclaimed. "I cannot—I will not believe it. There is some mystery here which must be cleared up. For your sweet sake I will unravel it, and until then I will believe nothing!"

And it seemed to him that there came over the features of the portrait a look of gratitude and happiness.

The first thing to be done was to find this man Lionel; the task seemed a hopeless one, but he must make the

effort. Where could he be found? If that music were his own, he would be amongst the foremost composers of the day, but he could discover none bearing that name. Probably it was not his own composition, or "Lionel" might be an assumed name. Or the man was dead—did not the letter say as much? Ah! Then there was no chance of clearing up the mystery of that letter! Nevertheless, he would make the effort; he could no longer stay in Melton Abbey.

For two years Sir Robert Melton wandered from place to place all over Europe in search of "Lionel," trying to discover the opera of which he knew just a few bars. But all in vain. He returned to his home at the expiration of that time, broken in spirit, weary of life.

Strange are the ways of Fate. He had been home but two days when, as he was passing through the main street of the nearest town to Melton Abbey, a man thrust into his hand the programme of a circus. His first impulse was to throw it down, but out of curiosity he glanced at it. It was of the usual kind—wonderful acrobatic feats of persons with names almost unpronounceable, performing horses and the like. With a smile of contempt he began to screw it up into a ball, but stopped and started as though struck by some unseen hand. Smoothing out the paper, he read the last item:

THE GREAT LIONEL

THE WONDERFUL MUSICAL CLOWN.

Was this the man he had been hunting for all over Europe? A clown! Surely not! He dismissed the matter from his mind, but some strange power impelled him to go and watch this man's performance. It was nearly time for the circus to begin; he hurried towards the hall and entered.

With ill-disguised indifference he watched the performers. He was not in the least interested in the marvellous (?) doings of the acrobats with the hard names; he was waiting to see the clown, the man Lionel.

When Lionel made his bow to an admiring audience, the supercilious curl of Sir Robert's lip became more pronounced. He was only an ordinary clown. He could not be the man for whom he had been searching so long. But the programme said he was a musical clown. He would wait a little longer.

After indulging in a few of the usual antics, the man walked to the side and received a violin from an attendant. With the skill of a practised player he ran the bow over the strings, tightened them and began to play. Sir Robert sat spellbound; *habitué* of the opera as he was, he doubted if he had ever heard anything so exquisitely performed. The piece of music represented the last moments of a dying man; no words were necessary to explain it; it was so vivid that even the least intelligent of the audience understood and appreciated it, and many were moved to tears. As the end approached, the clown first sank on his knees and then lay flat on the floor, playing the moving chords all the while. Fainter and fainter grew the sounds from the violin; then, with feelings impossible to describe adequately, Sir Robert heard the bars which he had played from the music written at the end of that letter.

The next minute, the clown was playing a lively air indicative of an awakening to life, and the charm of the

music was over for the Baronet. His agitation was too great to permit him to join in the well-deserved applause; he hurried from his box and made his way to the private door where the artistes entered. He was determined to see this man and learn more about him.

"Can I see the clown?" he asked, his voice quivering with suppressed excitement.

The doorkeeper looked at the new-comer in surprise, and shook his head.

"But I *must* see him!" exclaimed the Baronet, slipping a silver coin into the man's hand.

"I'll do what I can, sir," said the man. "But there he is, along the passage. Suppose you go up to him yourself?"

Sir Robert needed no second invitation, and he was soon face to face with the mysterious Lionel.

"May I speak to you in private?" asked the Baronet, speaking courteously, and as calmly as he could.

"No!" was the abrupt response. "I don't perform in private!"

Melton hesitated a moment and then said, with an effort, and scanning the clown's face narrowly the while:

"I come from Margaret."

With a startled cry Lionel sprang towards him and grasped him by the shoulder.

"Margaret! What do you know about Margaret? Where is she?" Then, collecting himself by a great effort, he continued with a forced laugh: "Bah! What is your Margaret to me?"

The Baronet's countenance betrayed the strength of his emotion. There was something behind that letter. What was the mystery between the two? He must know the truth at all costs! Taking out his card, he handed it to the clown.

"I must speak to you alone and at once!" he said peremptorily. "Put on your things and come with me now!"

At that moment a child came running up to the clown.

"Dad, if you don't make haste and dress you won't have any time for yourself before the evening performance."

The clown stooped and kissed her tenderly. She was about ten years old; a pretty child, with curly, golden hair and a sweet, lovable face. In appearance she resembled her father.

"If you like to come to my rooms," said Lionel, "I will talk to you. They may not be so comfortable as Melton Abbey, but they are close by, and I have but little time."

"Anywhere you please," returned the Baronet.

Half-an-hour later the two men were seated in a small, poorly-furnished room in a lodging-house near the circus. The child, Angela, had been sent down to the landlady while her father had a talk with "the gentleman." The Baronet had had some difficulty in persuading the man to speak, but a final appeal "for Margaret's sake" opened his lips.

"I was not always a clown," he began, with a tinge of bitterness in his voice; "I was one of the foremost musicians of the time. I was received in Society, and might have risen to the highest position in the world of music if—well! I was always careless and good-for-nothing!" He sighed, and continued: "About thirteen years ago I met Margaret. You know what her position was; you know the kind of man she had for a father—grasping, selfish, ready to make use of his daughter's

good looks and personal charms for his own advancement. I became infatuated with her, and I thought she loved me. She thought so apparently, for she was prepared to marry me." Sir Robert started. "It was arranged that we should be married clandestinely, for Margaret did not know my exact position—she was captivated by my skill as a musician and, presumably, by my manner—and she feared that her father would stop it if he knew."

"Why did you not tell her?" asked the Baronet.

Lionel shook his head mournfully. "The truth is that it was simply an infatuation on both sides. But with this difference: that after marriage my infatuation deepened into maddening love—all sacrificing love—whereas hers cooled into indifference. Her father learnt of our union and was furious. A child was born to us, the one you saw with me, Angela."

"Go on!" cried the other hoarsely.

"Seeing the way in which Margaret was being treated by her father, and that she was growing more and more indifferent towards me, although she idolised our child, I formed a plan for her release and punishment. I do not intend to excuse my conduct," he added as Sir Robert uttered an exclamation.

"I took the child and went away, to Margaret's grief and the father's delight. I wrote to her occasionally. Then I pretended that the child had caught diphtheria. The next letter announced the child's death; that was the letter you found. She must have written the music. Shortly after that, I got someone to write to her, telling her that I was dead. I gave no address in those three letters. I actually got a man to go to her and say that he had been to my funeral. Margaret believed she was free, I suppose, and married you. I never let her know my whereabouts, and she had never heard my true name. It is only since I have descended to the clown business that I have again taken the name of Lionel."

The story was finished. The Baronet understood it all now. Poor Margaret! Her only fault was that she did not tell him.

Dazed and overwhelmed, Sir Robert Melton left the clown and made his way homewards. He had a vague notion that he had promised to go again and see Angela, but he could recollect no more.

On the following afternoon a man came to the Abbey with a verbal message for the Baronet. The clown, Lionel, had met with a serious accident, and was in a dying state; he had asked for Sir Robert Melton. The Baronet, whose horse was saddled ready for a ride, dashed off towards the town, but with all his haste he was only just in time.

The clown's eyes lit up feebly as the Baronet entered; he tried to speak, but no sound came. With a last effort, he lifted his hand and pointed to the child. Sir Robert understood.

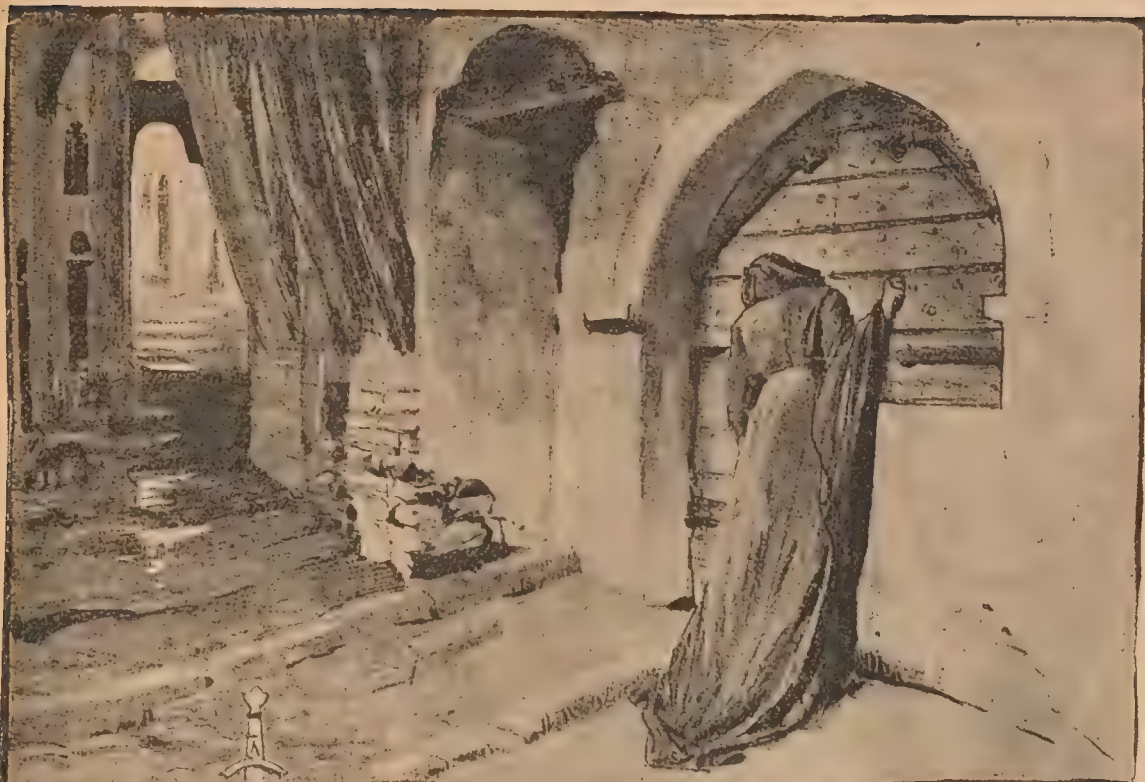
"I will be a father to her; she shall be my daughter as well as Margaret's!" he said.

A faint smile spread over Lionel's features; and with a deep sigh he expired.

Sir Robert Melton was as good as his word. As soon as her father was buried, he took the child to the Abbey. One of the first things he did was to take her to Margaret's room and lead her up to the portrait of his wife.

"Angela, my child," he said, "that is a picture of your mother!"

And it seemed to him that a look of mingled love and gratitude appeared on the features of the portrait.



The Man of Gold.

THERE was great grief in Burgos when it was known that the beautiful Incarnacion, the idol of the city, was dead. She would grace their streets no more with her pink cheeks like the oleanders which grew in the Moorish palace at Granada.

She had been seen the day before entering the house of the Jew Ishmael, the usurer who refused to help his old parents in their poverty. And when she came out of the abode of this unclean Jew, she tottered along in the darkening night, her clear, honest eyes fixed on the ground. In the morning the monks of the monastery of Miraflores found her body on the banks of the Arlanzon.

And from every street, and every house of the city, arose a cry of hatred towards the murderer.

The young girls wept, remembering their companion; the old women gave vent to harsh words and maledictions; while the men looked at each other darkly, swearing under their breath.

The peasants, coming from the mountains on their mules, were amazed at the uproar, and asked if the heathen had captured the standard of Castille. And when they heard the crime of the usurer they joined in the public anger, for nearly all owed him money for advances to be paid at harvest time.

"This Jew deserves to be put to death."

Some young cavaliers were playing dice. One of them cried:

"I claim the head of the Jew to hang at the door of my house." Another said: "I want his skin for my tambourine."

"I speak for the same," said a third, "because I wish to give to the ladies of Huelvas a crucifix covered with the skin of a heathen."

"The skin of a murderer—it would be sacrilege. I will take it myself, I will make an image of a Judas

A monk dressed in a black and white robe advanced. "I claim this man. We are told in the Gospel, 'Thou shalt not kill.' It is God who disposes of the lives of men. This one cannot be condemned without the judgment of our tribunal, of us, the Inquisitors of Castille."

The knight bowed, knelt on one knee, and kissed the robe of the monk.

"My father, your words are just. But this man betrayed me and delivered me to the heathen. Let me be the instrument of your justice."

"Who are you—you, the unknown one?"

"I am the Chevalier Pedro de Miranda." Then all recoiled a step, as from a ghost.

They remembered that some time ago a knight of this name made all the heathen of Granada tremble by his exploits. One day he was betrayed and poisoned. His body had disappeared; they thought it had been given to the Mussulmans.

And no one had heard of him any more.

The monk blessed him and said: "This is a miracle of Heaven, peace be with you. We will give you your wish."

In truth the Jew Ishmael had not slept peacefully. Not that he felt remorse in any way whatever for striking the young girl when she had reproached him for allowing his parents to live in misery, whilst he was enriching himself by defrauding others. But Incarnacion, her head reeling from the savage blow, had so frightened him by her imprecations that the terrors of superstition were awakened in his soul, and disturbing visions haunted him.

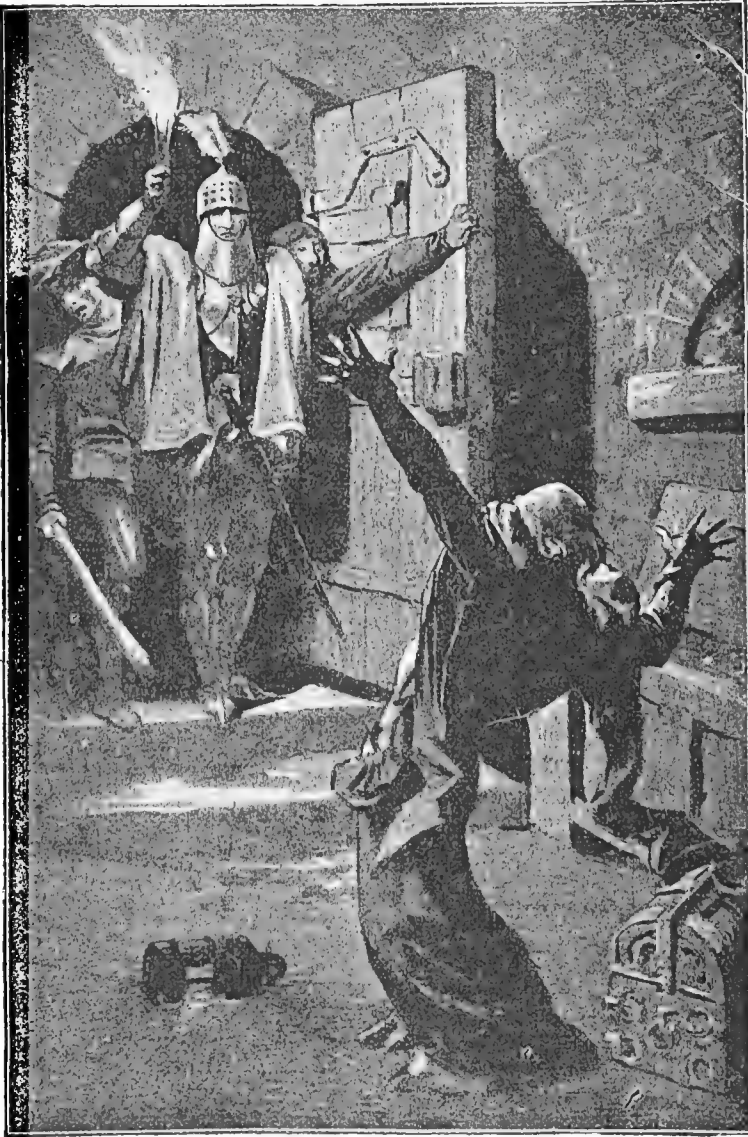
He could not rest, and before the first rays of daylight he arose from his bed. With the wariness of a cat, he glided through the village towards the banks of the Arlanzon, on the road to Miraflores, to claim the payment of a debt.

But there, on the sand by the river, Ishmael saw a black form. And upon approaching nearer, he recognised the corpse of Incarnacion, who had had no strength to go further on her way to the shelter and care of the monastery. Then the Jew was afraid, and ran away as quickly as he could. And as he turned to look at the place where the body lay, he saw numerous mysterious lights surrounding it. The monks were taking

away the body for burial.

But Ishmael imagined that it was a band of demons, and he felt that vengeance was near. He ran, terrified, towards his house. There he descended in great haste to the cave where his gold was hidden, and plunged his hands among the doubloons. For he knew from the Arabs that the sound of metal always put phantoms to flight.

Above, he heard cries and shouts which he realised were approaching him. And now they were at the end



The word came from his throat with a rattle, and he fell.

to expose in a public place, behind a grating, so that all who pass may revile it."

"To please everyone then we must toss for it. The highest gets the head and skin. The others share the money."

"Silence," cried a young knight, clad in white armour, whom no one had recognised. "Silence! You would not disgrace your knighthood by soiling your hands with such a fellow. I will punish him in the name of justice, and none can dispute my privilege."

of the long corridor which led to the underground refuge. In the darkness a light appeared. Ishmael jingled the pieces of gold still more. In vain. The light came nearer and nearer.

And before him a phantom rose, gigantic, clad in white armour, with a torch in his hand.

The Jew had scarcely strength to murmur: "Mercy." The word came from his throat with a rattle, and he fell, his face on the ground.

"Come, you rascally Jew, lift your head and look. Do you not recognise your victim?"

"My victim. Yes. I am a criminal, I am a sinner. Mercy."

And the Jew remained stretched on the ground, not daring to lift his eyes, and trembling like a leaf blown by the wind.

"Well, are you a whipped dog that you crawl thus on all fours?"

"By Javah! Incarnacion! mercy! look! Here is all my money. There are in these coffers doubloons and doubloons. Take what you will. Leave me only enough to give my parents to comfort them in their old age."

Behind the knight a number of people had crept in without Ishmael's knowledge.

A grave voice spoke.

"This man has confessed his crime, it is therefore unnecessary to question him. It now rests with us, the inquisitors of the State, to pronounce judgment. We will do what we think best for the good of all before the assembled people. Let the officers of justice bind this Jew. Let them bring him before our tribunal, and let him prepare himself to hear his condemnation."

And when the people saw the pale, fear-stricken face of Ishmael, their shouts redoubled, and the usurer felt himself crushed under the hatred of the whole city.

Then the Inquisitor pronounced these words:

"The Gospel says: 'He who strikes with the sword will perish by the sword.' Therefore it is just that he who has caused the death of his fellow-creature because of his gold, perishes by his gold."

This sentence was received with acclamation by the people, and a recorder read a judgment in Latin, that Ishmael could not understand.

Then he was led to the prison.

The next day the goaler introduced the executioner, followed by men carrying earth in baskets.

The Jew thought his last hour had come. He was deprived of his clothes, and stretched on the ground, trembling with terror and cold.

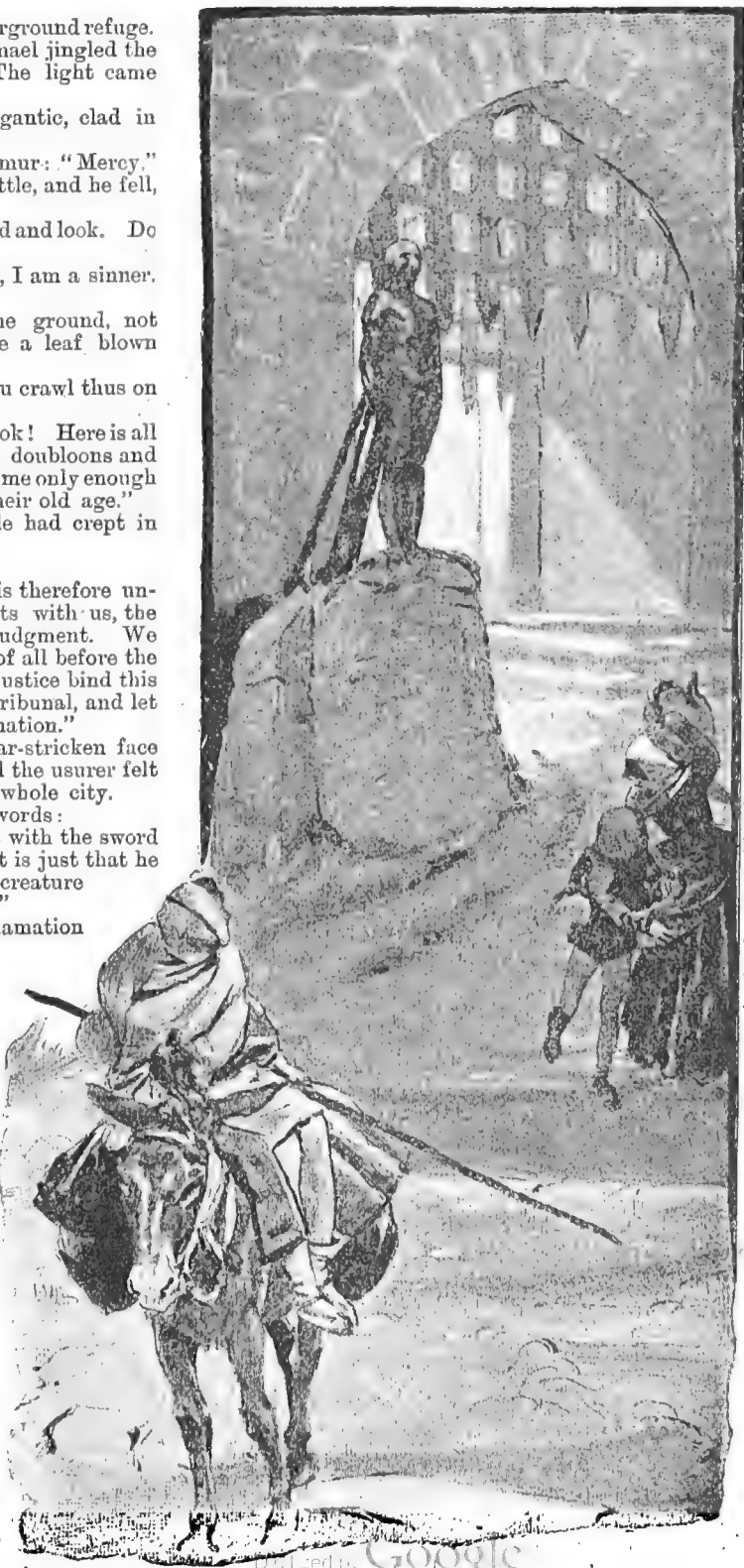
His agony was intensified by his ignorance of the punishment which awaited him. He shut his eyes and felt his body being covered with something moist, which seemed like wet paint, and in which he was buried alive. First his feet and his legs were covered, then his body was weighed down by something as heavy as lead; finally his head was inclosed in a mask of clay. And Ishmael awaited death.

But he soon lost consciousness.

When again his senses returned to him, he felt that his limbs were free.

Only the goaler was near him, and he thought he must have had a nightmare.

Many days passed.



One morning, the door of his cell was again opened, and the officers of justice entered, stripped him, bound him with ropes, blindfolded him, and led him from the prison.

Once more Ishmael heard the curses of the city. And as he approached the scaffold, they removed the covering from his eyes.

Then he saw on a raised platform the Inquisitor of Castille with his assessors; then, below, the white knight on his horse, in the armour of a phantom; then the penitents in their monks' cowls, who awaited his corpse; then cursing and threatening, all around him, the crowd. Instead of the scaffold, a pedestal of marble was erected in the middle of the square, and on the pedestal stood, sparkling in the sunlight, a statue all of gold. Ishmael noticed that this extraordinary statue was separated down the middle in two pieces.

The executioner said to him: "Look at that statue; it is made entirely of gold from your coffers."

The Jew grew faint and weak.

The executioner added: "That statue is to be your tomb."

A minister of religion addressed the doomed man, exhorting him to repent and be converted. But the Jew heard nothing.

He saw far away the banks of the Arlanzon and the place where the body of Incarnacion lay. Then the executioner seized him. For the last time Ishmael saw the sky and the light of day. Then he was placed in the statue, the two parts were fastened together, and eternal darkness began for the sinner, while the statue shone like the sun in the eyes of man.

Thus it was that for many years a statue of gold stood at the gates of Burgos. M. E.

A ROMANCE OF CARNIVAL TIME.

CARNIVAL! Visions come to me of the maddest dances, of flowery assaults upon beauty-lined equipages of dominoes in all the rainbow colours, of masks—masks? ah, yes! and chiefly of *The Mask*!

In all that carnival time, in that brilliant Roman atmosphere, the memory of Her shines out like the sun at noon. Some six or seven times I had met her, always at balls, where the delicious mystery of the mask covered all faces. Perhaps—who knows?—I met her many a time at the Opera, the theatre, or on the promenades; but, if I did, I was unaware of it, and she, for her part, gave no sign.

She wore, invariably, a black domino, and the identical jewel decorated her breast—a golden leaf, with pearls. She wore it as a pin, and by it I knew her.

From the very first there had been something about her that fascinated me. She was not tall! The jealous cloak that hid her figure gave no more than the merest hint of grace and beauty of line. Between the edge of the black glove and the sleeve a morsel of the whitest arm peeped out, and where her neck flowed from her shoulders, the curves were of the most dainty, the skin of the fairest, the modelling the most beautiful.

It was bewitching, the way she turned her head, now and then, in just the most delicious hint of coquetry, conscious, perhaps, that the splendour of her neck was something that it would have been a crime to hide or forget. Small curls of crisp brown hair caressed that neck. Her mouth, too, I have seen—a mouth not too small, with full red lips that could laugh, laugh until they awoke the spirit of laughter in the most woe-begone heart. Those lips pout, too, sometimes, but they were none the less kissable.

Her gowns were always in the subtlest taste; she avoided excess of *chic* just as she avoided the common. And her feet were ever shod in a way that proved their owner as proud of them—as who would not have been?

Chance—dear chance!—brought us together. We talked and we laughed in the easy manner of people to whom the world of masks is familiar, and who intend to make the present hour bring all it can of jest and pleasant chatter. From the first our spirits leapt in unison, and our conversation swept on pleasantly

with the buoyant flow of souls that understand each other.

We had no need of the weather, the season's music, its books or its players; we brushed aside at once all these mere topics *d'occasion*. Somehow, with her, one was never at a loss for the more intimate theme; the sense of fellowship of thought made me, at any rate, feel as if I had known her always. Then, at that first parting, I asked her if I were not to see her again.

"Oh, yes—in domino."

"And how am I to know you?"

She pointed to the golden pin. A week later we met again at the Grand Opera ball. Her fascination grew; there was no need of any of the usual aids to conversation; ourselves and life were interesting enough. And at this parting she told me, of her own accord, where I might see her again. Of course, only behind the mask.

So we would meet, first here, then there, and spend the hours together until she drove home. I could take her to the carriage but no further; she had made me promise never to follow her beyond that. I used to wonder if she came for my sake. As for me, I know well enough that it was for her sake that I haunted those ballrooms. And soon I was to realise why I went so gladly.

I was in love—with a domino! Who was she? Was she of the world of society or only of its half? A wife? Or a maid? When I would ask her, or try for the answer on all manners of byways, she would only laugh with that sweet, bell-like laugh of hers, and ripple out the words:

"*Chi lo sa?*" ("Who can tell?")

And so I came to call her Madonna Ohilosa.

There was nothing reckless about her conversation, nothing that was not delightful; yet she did not mind a witticism, now and then, that was a trifle bolder than the strictness of the drawing-room permits. But once when, in an unguarded moment, I pressed my lips to her hand for the faintest instant, she neither rapped me over the face with her fan nor flamed out into rage. She merely said, quite quietly, and almost pleadingly:

"Oh, don't do that, or I shall never come again."

And so I never repeated that moment. How it was that we escaped the perils of premature fencing with the

weapons of flirtation remains a mystery to me; often as we might mention or discuss the thing called love, we yet allowed no application to ourselves. Sometimes I touched on subjects from the finer side of life; her answers puzzled me; short, oftentimes happy and apt, she never would allow her remarks in these fields to take her far; it seemed as if she had culture, rather than the lack of it, to hide.

Don't think I did not try to see her face all this while! At the end of the very first ball I had asked her to unmask, but she only laughed, and fled. The same thing happened the second time. At the third, when we felt that we were good friends, that we could trust each other, she promised me that on the last night of the Carnival she would lift her mask for me—if I were good. If I were good? Of course I would be, under such a hope; and I stilled my curiosity as best I could, though at each meeting it grew like wildfire and with it another feeling.

Was she worth it all, this Mystery? Dared I hope that she deserved the love that leapt in me every time I saw her well-known domino-covered figure. Was she beautiful? Was she young? Or faded? Good? Or bad?

I was certain she was not ugly. And how could any woman be old with such a neck, such shoulders as those? Again, no schoolgirl could talk so cleverly, so intelligently, as she. What was the answer to the riddle? What would I learn when the mask capitulated. It seems absurd that a man who has seen the world with open eyes for more years than he cares to count, who has lived and loved, should have allowed a mask—a riddle—to disturb him so. But the fact remains that I thought of nothing else, dreamt of nothing else; and then there came one night when sleep never touched my eyes, and when I made the most foolish resolve, the maddest of plans for a solution of the mystery, the bringing it wholesale into my future.

And yet—one hardly likes to choose one's wife from behind a mask! One's wife! Yes, it had come to that; and I did not even know that she was not another's. Nothing—I knew of her absolutely nothing.

Yet the minute I was with Madonna Chilosa once more all doubt, all stress and strife in me was stilled; I chatted with her, looked into her eyes, listened to the music of her voice and felt myself happy.

And, then, too, there came to me the certainty that she was young and charming, and good and clever. But, an hour or so later, as I walked home through the chill night, doubt crawled gloomily back to me, and the old refrain, the old text for hesitation, awoke and would not die. "But if—but if—"

* * * * *

To him who waits come even the dying of the Carnival. It was the last night. We were together, she and I, in a dear little nook of the ballroom, a table between us and a bottle of Ruinart. It was the first since I had known her. Known her! I misuse the word; but it serves. Before this it had been nothing but ices, lemonades, and such-like trivialities. "It is for the last time!" had been my plea, and so she had smiled and said, "Very well, then; to say good-bye."

Was it a fancy of mine or was it really a tremour in her voice? I filled her glass and she lifted the veil of her mask a trifle, while my gaze went thirstily to her mouth.

"To-night, at last, I shall see your face," I said. My voice was almost choking with emotion. She laughed a little softly.

We talked of other things. We were both of us strangely moved; our words came more spasmodically; our silences were longer. Once, when my hand touched hers, she held mine for an instant. Only an instant, but I am sure there was a faint, sweet pressure.

Our glasses rang together.

"To the next hour's happiness!"

"Here's happiness—in this hour and all others!"

"And here's to you—you dear one, fair one!"

"Dear? Fair?"

"Oh, yes. I know—I know you are!"

"*Chi lo sa!*"

Of a sudden we were quiet. There in the hurly-burly of the Carnival's last feverish fire, ours was the only silent space. Every moment the rooms grew hotter, the people were uproarious. There was intoxication in the air.

"Tell me—do you love me?" This was the foolish way in which I broke our silence. "Why don't you answer? At least—at least you could—say no."

"Neither a yes nor a no would help you."

Still mystery and always mystery. But twelve o'clock came.

Twelve. Slow, sonorous—almost gruesome—coming into this whirl of folly, came the bells of the cathedral striking the hour.

"Twelve!" I cried.

"Yes," she said. "Ash Wednesday."

I took her hand. "You will keep your promise and unmask?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

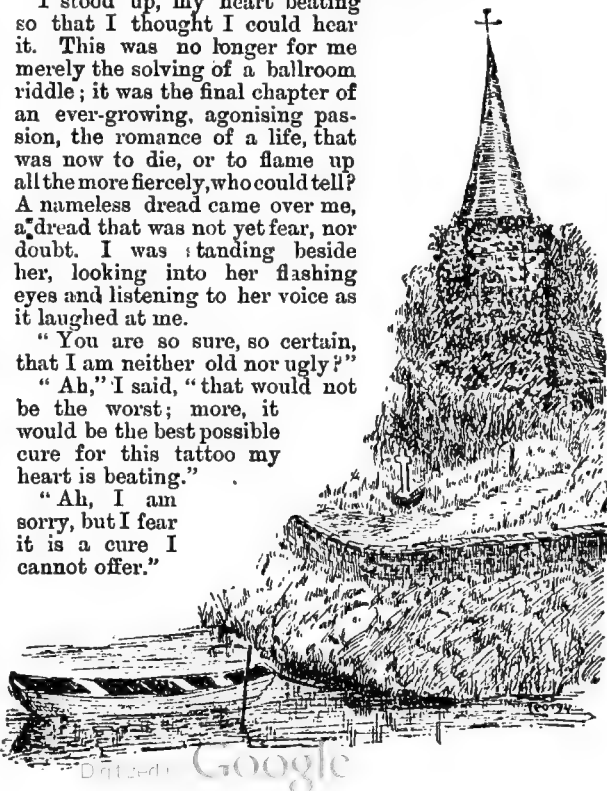
Another moment she hesitated, then she began fingering the fastenings of her mask. The knot was obstinate. "You will have to help me," she said.

I stood up, my heart beating so that I thought I could hear it. This was no longer for me merely the solving of a ballroom riddle; it was the final chapter of an ever-growing, agonising passion, the romance of a life, that was now to die, or to flame up all the more fiercely, who could tell? A nameless dread came over me, a dread that was not yet fear, nor doubt. I was standing beside her, looking into her flashing eyes and listening to her voice as it laughed at me.

"You are so sure, so certain, that I am neither old nor ugly?"

"Ah," I said, "that would not be the worst; more, it would be the best possible cure for this tattoo my heart is beating."

"Ah, I am sorry, but I fear it is a cure I cannot offer."



"Do you know that I am tempted to leave the veil unlifted, you dear, veiled picture! Perhaps—perhaps it were the wiser way."

"Perhaps."

And suddenly there welled up in me the resolution to leave my unknown in her *incognito*, and the clearer my resolve grew the quieter the torment in my brain. To leave the dream a dream; to keep the tender memory of the mystery—that was the right, the real way! Who could tell? Perhaps all the magic charm that drew me to this fair, masked mystery might pass and perish on the instant that the veil was drawn aside. A single furrow here, a wrinkle there, might shatter all the sweet illusion. Should I, of my free will, remove this page from the thin volume of my happy moments?

"No," I said, "I leave you the mask. Perhaps it is better for us both."

"In one way or another, surely," was all she said.

I had filled the glasses again, and we drank to my sentiment:

"To our meeting again, somewhere, somehow, by some good chance. May it come to pass, and happily!"

"It may be! *Chi lo sa!*" And she emptied the glass.

As she drank her eyes shimmered as with a mist. Lifting the veil of the mask, she showed the fair redness of her mouth; and as I watched there came that battle in my breast. Then, in another instant I had won the battle. I was calmness itself.

A few moments we lingered together, thinking of the weeks that were now ended, and noting the crowd of people that surged about us.

Without a word we rose to go. It was the end. With the knowing care of a husband I helped her into her cloak and accompanied her to her carriage. There was a last pressure of the hands, a last hesitation. I felt, somehow, that she was debating whether there was not yet something she would do or say at the last as a farewell; then she got in, and the wheels went swiftly over the street.

Gone! Gone!



I am just in time to prevent.

I went home slowly, alone. The damp breeze of spring cooled my brow. The streets were crowded with masqueraders—loud, song-singing, wild-walking. What would be their portion from the Carnival? Dull heads and empty pockets, much wasted time and energy and feeling.

Whereas my portion—

Ah well, Ash Wednesday is come again, another carnival is come and gone. But what a different carnival from that over yonder. This time I was as happy as a lover who has no doubts, no fears of conscience, no jealousy. What I had loved so well was gone, was naught save mist—a mist, a mask. Can one have heart-ache for a phantom?

Why are we not wise enough to keep all our illusions in this wise?

And yet, and yet, deep down beneath it all, serving as seed for all this calm, this peace, this happiness, was there not the hope, the dream, the fancy, that some day, from the whirlpool of life, a pair of dear, familiar eyes might yet gaze upon me, and all this vague love for a masquerader blossom forth to a real, tangible, lifelong happiness?

Chi lo sa!

Heigho! Was it months ago, or years, that I wrote that chronicle of two carnivals? I can remember the vivid glow of my hope as if it were all in the immediate yesterday. Hope! How would we live without it? And yet do the sweet longings that we surname hope give quite the complement of happiness that lies in fulfilment?

As I write, a roguish whisper brushes past my ear, a whisper that says: "*Chi lo sa!*"

And I take the whisperer and kiss away those roguish taunts, and wonder aloud how she ever found it in her heart to hide that sweetness from me for so long. No mask but kisses ever should have covered that face! Dear face! When it was masked it was a thousand torments—a text for battling hopes and fears. And now, now that it is fair before me always; now that it is mine for all time, how yet more wonderful in variety is it; what infinitely sweet shades of tenderness it shows, what—

Again a roguish person tells me I am writing foolishness. She hints that men tire easily; she shrugs her pretty shoulders, she begins to say once more: "*Chi lo sa,*" but I am just in time to prevent. For a kiss is always in time.

T. BRIDEGROOM.

HOME NOTES,

DATED JUNE 5th, 1897,

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BELOW you will find ten pictures. Each represents the name of a Peer of the Realm. The title alone is indicated, not the family name.

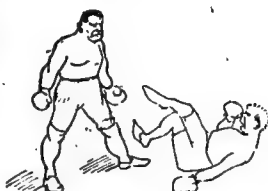
Write down their names in the spaces provided, and keep your lists until you are told to send them in.

Don't be discouraged if you cannot solve them all. Others may be no more clever than yourself. Send in fifty-five, or fifty, or even fewer.

You may forward as many attempts as you like, but each set of six must be in a separate envelope, and will be considered separate attempts.



No. 31.....



No. 32.....



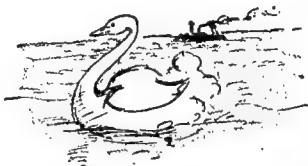
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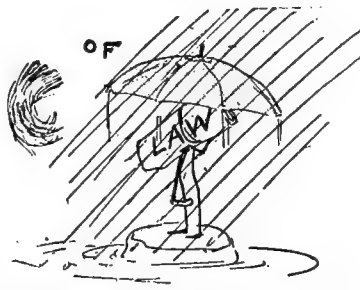
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Remember these Things.

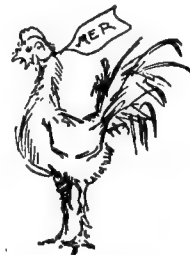
YOUNG PEOPLE should compete and get their elders to help them.
If there is any picture you cannot name some friend may be able to give you the information.
You need only give the titles of the people. The family names are not depicted.

Name.....

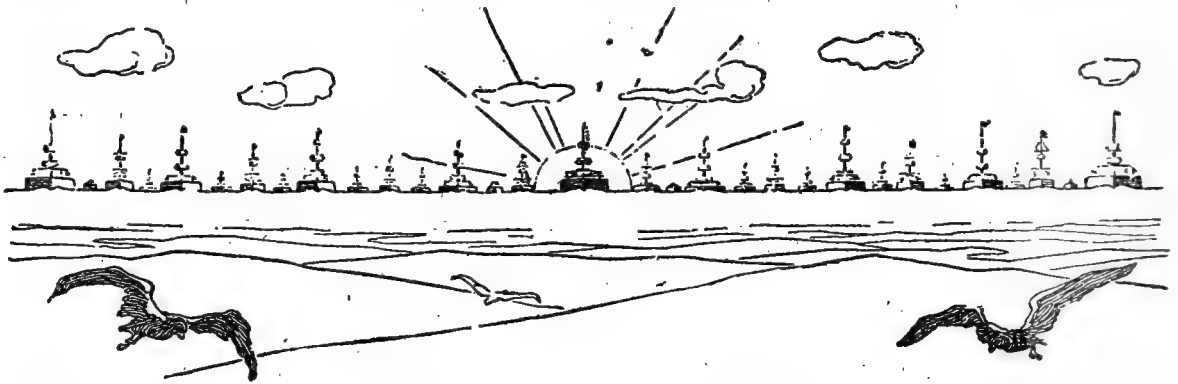
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No. 39.....



No. 40.....



The Last Battle of the World.

By PERCY HART, in the *Illustrated American*, with Introductory and Incidental Remarks by LEVIN CARNAC.

The Author looks into the near future and sees Uncle Sam officiating as Deputy Providence of the Planet—The Banded Nations of the Old World wait till he gives the signal for mutual annihilation—General smash—What Uncle Sam does with the pieces.

ALTHOUGH this really remarkable conception is put in the favourite and perhaps inevitable form of prophetic fiction, it is still something more than fiction, because it is a definite and pertinent expression of that sentiment which now appears to be the salient note of American policy. The United States, with the easy confidence and perhaps pardonably bombastic assurance of intelligent and lusty youth, seems to be fired with the gorgeous if unattainable ambition of playing the part of Deputy Providence of the Planet Terra, of arbitrator between the nations before they go to war, and of referee and final umpire of the death-grapple itself.

It is hardly to be expected that the intoxication of this enthusiasm should leave the American mind cool enough for a dispassionate study of the histories of nations which had risen to the dizzy heights of imperial glory, and plunged down to ruin through the fiery maelstrom of war, uncounted centuries before the Bird of Freedom startled the world with its first vociferation: while Atlantis was yet a dream and the Sunday newspaper a glory of the undawned.

It might, however, be reasonably expected that the American intellect should be cognisant of the history of the last couple of years. During that period the would-be Arbiter of the Nations and Deputy-Providential Peace-Preserver has thrice deliberately endangered the peace of the world, and once—to the eternal shame of those who profess to be its rulers—destroyed, perhaps for ever, the brightest prospect that human eyes have yet seen of ranging all the forces of the dominant race of earth under the banners of peace, progress, and civilisation. So much for the facts; the fiction is as follows:

It is the year nineteen hundred and something—the date, as usual, is left conveniently open—the whole world, saving the United States, has gradually ranged itself under two leaderships—that of Great Britain and that of Russia. The United States has preserved absolute neutrality and kept her counsels with such skill

that the wiliest diplomatists of Europe “knew not on which side the impenetrable heart of Columbia lay.” No details are given of the methods taken to gag the Press and throttle the stump-orators in and outside of the Representative Chambers, but of course this must have been accomplished somehow.

At length the United States Government modestly offers its services as general umpire and arbiter of the destinies of the world. Ouriously enough the nations read but heeded not, as thus: “The roar of war-like preparations rolled through every land. . . . The very earth trembled with the thunder of big guns at the testing grounds. . . . The beasts of the fields huddled in corners and shuddered as before a coming storm. . . . At last the gauntlet was flung and the official declaration of war went forth. . . .”

At this solemn juncture, the Bird of Freedom flapped up on to the fence once more and delivered its final message to the nations shuddering on the brink of mutual destruction. It was distinctly the most amazing message that even such an astonishing fowl could have crowed out. It was nothing less than a suggestion that the two hostile fleets into which the sea-forces of the Old World were divided, should mobilise themselves, one off Bordeaux and the other off Nova Scotia, each watched by a squadron of the United States Navy—one part of which, by a quite phenomenal stretch of journalistic imagination, the writer has somehow got across the Atlantic without the battleships sinking or turning turtle—to perform the office of Derby-course policeman and starter.

The signal being simultaneously given, naturally, by the firing of an American gun, the fleets were to start, steam into the middle of the Atlantic and there batter each other to pieces—of course always under the supervision of the American squadrons.

Here comes what is perhaps the most astounding part of the story. The allied nations, instead of telling the self-appointed world-policeman to mind his own business and scattering his toy squadrons in splinters over the face of the waters, actually accepted his suggestion and, in forgetfulness of all the lessons of war, and in defiance of all the principles of naval tactics, permitted themselves to be ranged up on either side of the Atlantic like a couple of football teams at either end of the field, and

awaited the Bird of Freedom's signal to kick off. The awaited crow came in the shape of the simultaneous bangs of two eight-inch guns which the presumable blank cartridges do not seem to have burst.

But this is enough—and more than enough—of introduction. It is time that I stepped aside and allowed Mr. Percy Hart to tell the rest of the story in his own soul-shaking words. I regret to say that several S.S. and P.W. artists have succumbed to brain-fever in a gallant effort to do justice to the double-page illustration which adorns the story, "painted by Walter Russell from detailed suggestions given by leading United States naval officers."

THE NATIONS GET READY.

Every war-vessel—no matter how antiquated—in the possession of the nations involved was called into service, from the huge, fortress-like battleships of the present day down to the old, scarred frigates, veterans of many wars, tranquilly dozing away their last days of usefulness as receiving or training ships, in calm, sleepy harbours, and now to be rudely awakened from their slumbers, caulked, re-armoured, fitted with new engines and modern guns, and steered lumberingly out to sea to buffet once more the billows of the main.

The fastest ocean-going steamships going were confiscated to the uses of war and fitted with rapid-firing guns.

Sea-going tugboats were adapted to the torpedo and other services, and private steam-yachts of exceptional speed were subsidised as dispatch boats.

Only the most useless old hulks were sent to the foreign stations in place of the ships withdrawn, and the most antiquated commanders and worthless officers and men appointed to them.

Nevertheless, curses loud and deep arose from cabin, wardroom and fore-castle of each old naval relic as her people realised that they would miss the glorious fray in mid-Atlantic.

In order to complete these tremendous preparations in the quickest possible time, the mechanics of all the conflicting nations were pressed into service, and the dockyards of the world became huge hives of industry, in which no distinction was made between day and night; and in the glare of the great electric lights the huge trip-hammers only paused in their thunderous blows to allow their heated parts to cool.

Innumerable private shipyards were subsidised by the various governments; and factory buildings and even private dwelling houses were hastily adapted for the manufacture of materials.

Every industry known to man was brought into requisition in fitting out the fleets; coal was in such demand that few private families could afford to use it, and the prices of all other commodities rose in proportion.

THE GAGGED PRESS ADOPTS YANKEE METHODS.

For some time the world's newspapers contained scarcely anything but comparisons of the respective fleets and detailed accounts of the fighting qualities of the different vessels; but in due course such publication was officially suppressed, and the editors were obliged to satisfy their readers by sensational and purely imaginary articles on the subject.

Yet, owing to the well-organised spy system maintained, each government was informed of every important step taken by the others, and was thus enabled to meet it.

Inventors of all kinds of offensive and defensive war material came forward and offered their plans and services

to their respective governments; models of every conceivable description were sent in, from indestructible warships to cork legs.

Public-spirited capitalists poured their wealth into the national coffers.

Vessels and guns were planned, made and tested in a small fraction of the time that would have been thus consumed ordinarily.

Ammunition was manufactured and stored in such enormous quantities that scientists gave warning of the terrific atmospheric results and possible danger to the world itself in case of certain accidents.

Speculators tore their hair in wild uncertainty, and stock exchanges became pandemoniums of raving Bedlamites.

In order to fully man the fleets, the bulk of the immense standing armies of the nations were put into naval uniforms and assigned in due proportions to the different vessels; marines became bluejackets and soldiers became marines, artillerymen being especially in demand.

Officers of high rank in the armies eagerly sought for positions in the navies.

The forces were still further supplemented by conscription among the civilian classes, including residents abroad, who were at once summoned home.

This gave rise to numberless complications, and the few consuls who had not been recalled were driven to the verge of lunacy, while the legal profession rubbed its hands and laughed in glee.

Sailing ships rotted at the wharves for want of crews to man them; fish became scarce and dear, because there were no fishermen—for no conscripts were so prized as the sturdy fisher-lads of England, France, and the North Countries, who left their wives and children to handle the boats and trawls while they donned the cutlass belt, and drilled at the big guns, learning the meaning of the division officer's orders: "Cast loose and provide!" or "Boarders away!"

Maimed old veterans in naval hospitals straightened their rheumatic backs, drew plans in the dust and cackled of how it should be done.

Children just able to toddle procured wooden weapons and fought instead of playing.

Mothers with babes in arms crooned war-songs half unconsciously, and wept, while they crooned, for the husband or son so soon to go.

Sisters, sweethearts and wives in every land listened, with heavy hearts, blind with tears, to the glowing words of their loved ones, bade them go and be true to the flag, and did their duty as only brave women can in times like these.

And all this for what? Ah, who could predict the sublime, awful climax that came all-unforeseen?

BULLS AND BEARS.

In accordance with the arrangement, one squadron of the American navy proceeded to Bordeaux, France, and another to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

At the former port what was known as the "Bear Alliance" fleet was to rendezvous, each ship flying her national flag, emblazoned with the Russian Bear; while at the latter port were to gather the vessels of the "Lion Alliance," their colours similarly adorned with the emblem of the British Lion.

The magnitude of these two fleets was almost beyond comprehension; in comparison with them the fabled aggregations of ancient war-galleys or the Spanish Armada sink into insignificance.



The fleets had annihilated each other.

At the time it was impossible to count or even estimate approximately the number of vessels which assembled at each port. There were miles of them—hundreds—yes, thousands of them!

The noise of the sailors' steps assembling for inspection at certain hours, the continuous piping of whistles and ringing of bugles, the words of command, the rattle of marines' rifle-butts on deck, the creaking of davits as boats were lowered and raised, and, above all, the simultaneous striking of bells every half-hour, created an accumulation of sound that was simply appalling.

Mountains of coal lined each shore for miles and melted away like snow in summer. The health authorities of each port were compelled to exert every effort in their power to prevent an epidemic arising from the quantities of refuse thrown overboard. The cavalry and other troops of Canada and France which had not been transferred to the navies were summoned in haste to do police duty in controlling the crowds of sailors ashore and the hordes of adventurers and harpies who throng every naval station and make poor Jack their prey.

Within the harbours the older, less effective men-of-war and the subsidised merchant steamers were moored closely together. Outside in the open roads lay the armoured and protected cruisers at anchor.

Out beyond these, and of necessity in deep water, lay the great battleships, retaining their positions by means of their propellers, while in and out among the ships

darted launches, cutters and gigs like gigantic water-bugs. Hours before the time appointed for starting, the different squadrons were manœuvring for positions; but at last the two mighty fleets lay at exactly ten nautical miles out at sea from the mouths of the respective harbours, in line of battle according to rating—the fast cruisers, gunboats, and torpedo-boats forming the advance guard and skirmish line ahead of the big battleships, while astern of these lay the mercantile auxiliaries and less servicable warships.

Astern of each fleet hovered and raced the swift dispatch boats, armed with rapid-firing guns, under orders from their respective admirals commanding to prevent any non-combatant vessels from accompanying the war-vessels, under penalty of being fired upon should they persist in doing so—an order which called down anything but blessings upon the admirals' heads from the enraged Press representatives; and from certain enterprising individuals who had chartered steamers and sold excursion tickets at unheard of prices, which were eagerly bought by would-be spectators of the fray.

The perfectly adjusted chronometers on the flagships of the two American squadrons assigned for the duty of "seconds" in this terrible duel left no chance of uncertainty as to time; and as the appointed moment drew near a stalwart Yankee bluejacket, with chevrons on his sleeve, stood coolly on the deck of each, the lanyard of an 8-inch rifle gun in his brawny fist, awaiting the order to fire.

At last! The great guns simultaneously, though three thousand miles apart, boomed out the welcome signals, and with a roar of rushing water like that of Niagara, the sea was instantly turned into creamy foam for miles, as the stately fleets moved majestically forward, one toward the east and one toward the west.

From the hills behind them and the hosts of vessels clustered around the starting-points arose two mighty shouts like crashing thunder, which shook the very earth, as, with bands playing and colours flying, over five millions of human beings were taken out to sea; and amid the sobs of lonely women the last monster of war disappeared on the horizon.

THE COLD-DRAWN AGONY.

Then throughout every land a Sabbath-like stillness prevailed for days; there was little thought of work or play. The very savages in Africa wondered: for the whole world watched and prayed. Watched and prayed through a long, long month of wretched, miserable suspense—for no word came from the warships: the Atlantic billows rolled in to the shores, but told not what they had seen.

Men grew haggard and women pale, with an awful dread of they knew not what, and prayed aloud to the sun and the stars to tell what they knew.

Longer suspense could not be endured, and the two American squadrons were ordered to sea to reconnoitre, with orders not to interfere with or in any way impede the movements of the combatants.

The squadrons sailed, and met in mid-Atlantic; they separated, and cruised north, south, east and west over the broad expanse of ocean; but never a sign did they see to show that a battle had ever taken place.

Imagining that the tide of battle might have turned into a chase, ships were sent to cruise in every navigable ocean on the globe; from the Arctic to the Antarctic, through the Indian to the North and South Pacific, around Cape Horn and through the stormy China Sea and the calm inland Sea of Japan, they cruised and cruised.

And then, as the reports came in, one after another, from the remotest corners of the earth, always saying "Nothing found!" the world began slowly to realise, with sinking hearts and bated breath, that a thing had come to pass, the dread of which no man had dared to whisper: The fleets had annihilated each other!

Vainly the world waited, still hoping against hope, till, as the waves cast up on different shores fragments of splintered wood-work and sea-worn cabin trimmings, we were forced to comprehend that modern science had rendered warfare so mighty in its power, so accurate in its calculations and so deadly in its effects that the two enormous fleets had simply demonstrated a problem in regard to the meeting of two evenly matched, irresistible forces.

No man was left to tell how the fight was fought; there they lie, admiral, cabin-boy and all, and there they will lie, in sailors' graves, while the great waves sweep along and the storm-winds sing their requiem, till the sea gives up its dead!

None can say how the battle began; who fired the first shot and who the last, or what deeds of valour were done that day; how the great guns crashed and roared, and the rifles in the armoured tops poured down their leaden hail; how the blood dripped on the snow-white decks, and how the wounded screamed while the surgeons did their noble duty all in vain, or how the ships went down, one after another, with hideous roll and plunge.

How many went down, like the *Birkenhead*, with crews singing a death-song as they stood drawn up on deck?

How many sailors thought of home as they sank, how many cursed, and how many prayed?

What Farraguts, Perrys or Cushings were there in the fight, whose names will never go down on their country's roll of honour. Who can tell?

UNCLE SAM ASSUMES THE HALO.

But out of this a great peace has arisen. It is the peace of a world awakened by the vision of hell which it has seen.

Nerveless with horror and despair, the nations turned with one accord to the United States and besought her offices in mediating peace. Again the American Government recognised its opportunity and made its position serve for all humanity. It stipulated for the dismantling of all fortifications, and for the abolition of all great standing armies and navies. To this the world assented.

It was further agreed that the United States, as the one nation whose voice had been invariably against aggression, should be chosen as the police power of the world, and that its small but efficient navy should be authorised to prevent, by coercion, if need be, any nation from building another fleet of warships.

And thus the future prosperity, advancement and happiness of the whole world were hidden in the hands of a country that a little more than a century ago was fighting for its own independence.

Whether the end has justified the means—whether it were right that this mantle of peace and prosperity should have been woven amid the sobs of widows and orphans, desolated homes and broken hearts—it lies with our Government of the future to prove by its management of the great trust that lies in its charge.

And some day we shall know it all—when the sea gives up its dead!"

BUT NOT JUST YET.

Now that, of course, is all very pretty and poetical. The idea of Uncle Sam in a halo and white robe sitting on the fence and thrumming the harp of peace while the Bird of Freedom, perched on his shoulder, crows the hymn of universal brotherhood to the tune of the Star-Spangled Banner is a conception which few, if any, of the poets or painters of the effete Old World could have done justice to.

Unhappily, however, the practical mind of the brutal Saxon will, I fear, be prone to turn aside from its somewhat overwhelming glories to ask, not how peace came to the world, but what Uncle Sam did with the pieces after he had persuaded the other nations to obligingly sink each other's fleets in the middle of the Atlantic, and leave him in possession of the only efficient naval force in the world.

This isn't poetry, but what other kind of question could one, in all seriousness, ask with reference to a nation, which, a short time ago, did its best to plunge the Anglo-Saxon race into a fratricidal strife for the monopoly of an alleged gold-field in a little twopenny-halfpenny State run by swindlers and murderers, and which only the other day wiped its boots upon the tatters of the Anglo-American Arbitration Treaty and turned to cheer to the echo the utterances of a traitorous ex-convict when he mendaciously stated that the United States had whipped Great Britain three times, and that there would never be war between England and America because England never fought any nation that used Gatling guns.

It is not from a people which applauds or even tolerates such villainies as these that the nations can seriously hope to receive the olive-branch of universal peace.

The Snares of the Ungodly.

THE STORY OF A FLIRTATION.

"You are a very pretty woman, my dear, but you can scarcely expect all the world at your feet."

"Are you worried about Tom in this instance?" the beauty said lazily.

"Tom is a fool," Mrs. Black retorted. "Why don't you take fair game?"

"But he is so refreshing, that brother of yours. He actually believes in things. Fancy that!"

"Of course he does, Madge. He is young enough to treasure his illusions. Oh, don't spoil the world for him yet," she said half beseechingly.

The beauty stretched herself out in a big arm-chair and waved a fan indolently, stirring the wisps of hair that strayed about her temples.

"I wonder you asked him here to meet me," she said indifferently.

"I did not ask him; he came unexpectedly. He might better have jumped into the lion's mouth!"

"Thanks, my dear. It's only a difference of beasts, as you say. My method of devouring is, possibly, more leisurely," she said, with a lazy drawl that was part of her fascination.

"Madge, you must marry; you need an establishment," Mrs. Black said abruptly.

The beauty said nothing, but sat down before the dressing-table and powdered her face and throat profusely, taking care that the puff should not brush against her wavy brown hair. She could see in the mirror that Mrs. Black was gazing at her intently, though her thoughts seemed to have gone beyond the range of her eyes.

Suddenly Mrs. Black exclaimed: "I've got him!"

"Got whom?" the beauty inquired.

"The very man for you. He's game that will require your best ammunition. Even then I'm a bit sceptical as to the result, but at least I'm giving you a chance to try."

"It sounds interesting, Grace: most difficult things are."

"He is a man of endless affairs with women, but somehow he always slips the leash at the last moment. At least he will amuse you, and his money is not the least of his attractions."

"Will he come here to stay?"

"I will ask him, for a week."

"I think I shall marry him, Grace," the beauty said complacently. "He will ask me at the end of the week, you see!"

"Your assurance is superb, my dear Madge."

"Of course. When one has not money one goes through the world on other things. Do you want to bet on your prodigy?"

"By all means, Madge. I frankly acknowledge that you hold trump cards, and I shall play into your hands, so the odds are decidedly in your favour, but I'll wager you don't land him high and dry in a week."

"Make it chocolates, and it's a go. Send for the victim while I arrange my bait; and I won't use Tom—not if I can help it," she added. "I'm going to take a nap and prepare for the fray. When shall we open the encounter, Grace?"

"At dinner. He arrived an hour ago while you were cycling with Tom, and I sent him off for a swim with Jack. You did not suppose I meant your visit to be deadly, did you?"

"I never suppose, Grace; it's such an exertion in hot weather. *Au revoir* then until dinner," and the beauty sauntered out of the room.

Mrs. Black did not call them house parties in her pretty villa by the sea, but the times were few when she had not charming women and several men staying with her. Madge was of a type she found useful, but irritating, and in this particular instance she was annoyed because, forsooth, Tom was head over heels in love with the beauty, and he was the one thing on earth Mrs. Black adored.

She thought, as her guest left the room, that she had been preparing for her a very pretty comedy. Griswold was a man no woman could marry, and she knew what she was talking about from experience. Not that anything would induce her to enter again the bonds of matrimony, but there had been a time when she had spread her net for him in vain. Madge could have her fling at him to no purpose, and Tom would be saved. The end justified the means. Mrs. Black congratulated herself upon her cleverness in bringing in so useful an element.

But two days after, fate took the game out of Mrs. Black's hands, sending Tom to Edinburgh and leaving Griswold to have things quite his own way. That he admired the beauty was a matter which brooked no conjecture. He seemed already absorbed in her in a manner that excluded his hostess, and for that she had not been prepared. All necessity of saving her brother from the snares of the ungodly having been for the moment removed, Mrs. Black was suddenly confronted by the fact that she objected to being set aside for any woman, even though she had deliberately planned the game Madge was playing so skillfully.

She took her cousin Jack into her confidence one evening while they strolled on the beach after dinner. Jack was dull, but observing, and the best of safety valves.

"You and Madge don't seem to hit it off exactly," he said.

"I hate her, Jack," the woman said fiercely. "Do you know why? She took Tom away from me—dear old Tom, who was like clay in her hands—and why? To feed her insatiable vanity. That's why I got Griswold down. I thought he would fill her to the brim and Tom would be disgusted. But the boy has gone off with the love of her in his heart and Griswold is bewitched beyond reason."

"I'll settle her game, old girl. Just leave it to me," Jack said consolingly. "Griswold is much too good for her." And a conspiracy having been formed between them, the two finished their walk in silence.

On the balcony the beauty was tilting back in the hammock, which she kept swaying by occasionally touching one tiny foot to the floor. She wore a pink mulle that rivalled a flower for very simplicity, but the experienced eye recognised that much thought had gone into the creation of so artless an effect. Her wavy hair was drawn into a loose coil on her neck, which gleamed white and soft in the light that fell from a lantern above her head. Griswold sat in a chair pulled close up beside her and leant over her with a caressing movement which was a way he had with women.

"Have we been awake or dreaming?" he was saying. "Life seems to me only to have begun since—can you think when?"

"Time is as nothing to me ever," she said. "It is only events for which I care."

"Am I an event, you pretty primrose?"

"You?" she queried, lifting her eyebrows. "I don't think I had thought of you at all."

"Then it is cruel of you to say so after all these days together."

"Oh, forgive me," she said, with a pretty show of penitence. "I am brutally frank, I know."

"I like it," said the man seriously; "it's an uncommon trait in a woman. You are beautifully honest and honestly beautiful."

"Then you are not cross any more?" she said, slipping her hand into his with beguiling innocence.

"Kiss me," he said, bending his face down to hers.

But there was a sound of steps on the balcony, and the kiss floated off in the air as Griswold slipped into his chair, and two figures came round the corner.

Madge bit her lip with vexation, and the man was conscious of having gone pretty far.

He was thinking of it later when the women had gone off to bed and he was left to the solace of his pipe in the smoking-room. So many women had played havoc with his heart before! But she was not like the rest, and he wanted her—of that he was sure. But for always, his conscience questioned? Ah, there was the rub! To kiss and caress was one thing—to marry, another—and yet—

Two soft arms were round his neck, and a woman tilted his head against her breast.

"They spoil our paradise," she whispered, "and I've stolen away to say good-night. Are you glad, my dearest of men?"

For answer he drew her down and held her.

"I love you beyond—"

"All other women?"

"You will marry me soon, you dainty primrose?"

"Perhaps," with a show of reluctance. "Good-night just once more. I am going before I am discovered," she said.

As she vanished through the doorway, Jack came in from a stroll which Griswold had refused to take with him.

"There's a suspicious odour of violets about you, old man," he said, sniffing the air; "and your pipe's gone black out. Any visiting angels hovering near?"

"Haven't seen any, Jack. Visitors aren't in my line."

"No, you stick to cold facts. There's one satisfactory thing about you, Griswold; you haven't any imagination."

"The world is so explanatory it leaves nothing to be imagined, Jack. Sit down and smoke a bit," he said, with an excess of sociability.

"Thanks. I will," sinking into a chair and lighting a cigarette. "It's beastly damp outside," he suggested, as if the weather crowded all other thoughts from his mind.

"Is it? Well, I'm much too lazy to get up an argument."

"Is your affair with the beauty so exhausting?"

"What do you mean?" the other said stiffly.

"That a rattling old pace sometimes lands one in a ditch, though by some miracle you've leapt all the treacherous places so far."

"Then I would not bother about me now," he said soothingly. "I may wear a charm round my neck."

"Goodness knows you need it with a woman like that!"

"Oh, come now, Jack, you're too melancholy! Liver gone off again?" he asked sympathetically.

"Liver be banged! You're making a fool of yourself for the first time in your life. The woman's playing for you on a wager."

"It's a lie!"

"Take care, old man; friendship has its limit," Jack said warningly.

"Pity that did not occur to you before," sneeringly.

"I'd no idea you were so deeply involved. She's not worth a quarrel, old man—few women are; but when a man's off his head I realize he's not responsible."

"Then keep your beastly ideas to yourself. They're an insult to decency." And Griswold stalked out of the room.

It was nearly noon the next day when he awoke with a delirious feeling that something most unusual had been happening.

Was it love and not passion that was stirring within? He dressed with an eagerness that was not habitual, and wondered if the primrose had unfolded her petals. How exquisitely sweet she was! As he started from his room a paper slipped under the door for the first time attracted his attention. He stooped and picked it up—the writing was not familiar.

"Forgive me if I deceived you," it read. "Being proof against the fascinations of all women, but yourself beguiling the unwary, you were lawful prey. I really half loved you last night, and you did ask me to marry you. What other woman can say that?"

"Grace thought she had the game in her hands. It was a harmless deception and threw her off the scent, for I'm going to marry her adorable brother, Tom. He believes in me, and as Grace herself said, I need an establishment. You could afford me, I suppose, if I wanted you, but I don't. Tom is charmingly young and tractable, and you—you love so many women."

"To be honest—which is a virtue I seldom indulge in—I happened to play my game more cleverly than Grace because I had so much at stake—Tom, and a bet to win. And as I hate to pay a bet, I always make a point of not losing. Ask Grace, and tell her I stipulated for chocolates!"

"So you can fancy me already *en route* for Edinburgh, where Tom is counting the hours in the most approved lover-like fashion, and I am counting many things besides. You and Grace and that horrid cousin Jack are an amusing trio—"

"And I called her a 'primrose'" he said, as he tore the note into fragments.

A BROKEN MASK

BY JOAN BARRETT.

SUMMARY.

THE story opens with an introduction to the inmates of two farm-houses in an English village named Thorneydene. Honeyotts Farm has recently been taken by a young stranger, John Gillway, about whom there seems to be a mystery.

His neighbour, Farmer Strange, is a widower with twin daughters, Diana and Kitty, who have been brought up for the most part by a wealthy aunt, Mrs. Caffyn, who is about to take them on the Continent.

Gillway has already fallen in love with Kitty, who was at first pleased by his attentions. She soon wearied of them, but being half afraid of him, makes many promises of fidelity before going abroad with her sister and aunt, which she never intends to keep.

At Capri they meet with Bernard Eliot, nicknamed "the Nabob" on account of his wealth. He speedily wins the affections of all three ladies, but seems to prefer Di's society.

At the end of three months they return to London, and as the two girls have now attained their majority they are given the option of remaining with their aunt or returning to their father for good. Kitty chooses the former and Di the latter.

Henceforth Diana devotes herself to the management of her father's house and dairy. She meets Gillway, and hears for the first time of the relations which had existed between him and Kitty. Soon after, the Stranges are surprised by the arrival of Kitty and the Nabob, who explain that they were married that morning, and have come to spend their honeymoon at Greyhouse Farm!

"The Nabob" is delighted with the simple home life of the farm, and shows no inclination to depart. Kitty, however, soon begins to pine for excitement and gaiety, and in consideration of her health her husband, very much against his will, rents "The Towers," a beautiful country seat, a few miles from Thorneydene. Kitty's spirits brighten rapidly at the prospect of entertaining the *élite* of the neighbourhood in one of the finest houses in the county.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE SKATING PARTY.

THE trees were all naked, and the wind, as it hustled their dead children away, seemed to be forcing them to dance to its shrill, cruel music. The snow lay in broken patches over meadows and green hills where the hungry rooks were cawing and wheeling, and the smaller birds twittered plaintively to each other in the hedgerows about the paucity of berries and the hardships of winter. A grey sky, whose clouds foretold more snow, frowned angrily down upon the wintry world.

"The Towers is full of guests," said John Gillway, looking at Di's pure, pale profile as she hurried along by his side, with her hands tucked into her muff, and her head a little lowered. "Are you going there for Christmas?"

"Yes. I didn't want to go. Dad won't accept, and I don't like to leave him all alone. It seems unfeeling."

"I don't suppose he minds," said Gillway thoughtlessly, and the hot colour rushed into Di's cheeks as she cried:

"Mind! Of course he minds! Dad and I are all in all to each other, and I wouldn't leave him if Bernard had not seemed so hurt and sorry at our refusal."

"And Kitty—wasn't she hurt and sorry, too?"

Di glanced up quickly, catching the irony in Gillway's tones. The flush grew deeper in her face.

"Yes, she was sorry," she answered, her anger melting

away as she looked at Gillway's shabbily clad figure and careworn, haggard features.

"I have heard that nearly all the county families have accepted invitations for the ball, and that Mrs. Caffyn is going to bring a large party of swell friends from London. Your aunt must know a great many rich people?"

Di nodded, and wondered why John Gillway was taking so keen an interest in the Towers gaieties.

"Are many of them going to stay long?" he asked.

"I don't know. Kitty told me that the house would be packed for New Year's Day."

Gillway appeared to be reflecting as he walked with his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Shall you be there for New Year's Day?"

"No; I am only going for the ball. My wardrobe is not big enough to provide me with sufficient frocks for a fort-

"Are you going there for Christmas?"



night's visit—not large enough for a week even. Kitty was rejoicing because she had a new gown for every day, and her jewels have come from the bankers. She had not seen them since Bernard gave them to her for wedding gifts, so it is just like being given presents all over again."

"Has she much jewellery?"

"A great deal."

"Eliot is a lucky fellow," said Gillway with bitterness. "Unlimited riches and a lovely young wife! I expect Kitty will be able to make a finer show of precious stones than old Lady Rivers"—he paused, suddenly aware that Di was looking at him in surprise. "I've heard of her famous tiara," he added. "My housekeeper, Mrs. Shales, is my authority. According to her, the emeralds in her ladyship's 'crown' are as big as 'reddishes.'"

Di laughed.

"Oh, they are large," said she. "I don't know if Kitty will dare to compete with Lady Rivers. She will have a chance, because the famous tiara will be on view. Lady Rivers has accepted for a week, I know."

"I wish," Gillway said, plunging his hands into the pockets of his rough ulster, "that I had a few of those green 'reddishes' in my possession, or the sum of money that they are worth. Everything is going wrong with me just now. I am beginning to realise that a man must be a genius to make farming pay."

Di echoed his sigh. Things were very much in the same condition at Greyhouse, and she knew that in spite of her economies, and Betty's excellent management, Farmer Strange would have a hard struggle to pay his Christmas bills.

"Well," said Gillway after a pause, "no reasonable man can expect to become rich by honest means. Everybody knows that thieves and rogues prosper, while honest men starve or worry themselves into early graves. To call a man an honest fellow is to call him a fool."

"I'd rather be an honest fool," said Di, in her clear, fearless tones, "than a wealthy knave. I don't believe you are right. Roguery can't always pay. I don't, I'm sure it can't, and it's good to feel that you can hold your head up, and meet everybody's eyes, and never feel ashamed to accept a proffered hand! A rogue must live in constant fear of being discovered."

"That doesn't trouble him," Gillway declared. "Your genuine rogue doesn't care a rap for his victim's opinion. To take all he can and to keep all he gets is his sole concern. And he's right. Might is valued before all your old-fashioned virtuous theories, and strength is more respected than good principle. A clever, wicked person will have a hundred admirers and imitators where your stupid, good fool has ninety-nine to despise him, and to take advantage of his weakness."

Di was silent. Her face had grown so grave that Gillway smiled, and asked:

"Do you think I am a very bad person to have such theories, Miss Strange?"

Di turned her head and looked steadily into the man's dark eyes. They were smiling, and his lips had parted.

"I don't believe you are bad," she answered seriously. "Only I'm sorry you think like that. I wish you didn't. It seems to me that having good thoughts makes one more contented with one's position, and helps one to buffet with troubles when they come." Her voice changed from grave to gay. "Here's daddy!" she cried joyfully. "I do hope he has sold his barley."

Farmer Strange, on his way home from market, drew in his old grey cob, and flourished his hand to Di and Gillway.

"Barley's sold!" he shouted. "I looked for you at market, Gillway, you'd have got rid of your hay if you'd took my advice and sent it in. Why didn't you?"

"Too much trouble," answered Gillway. "And not enough profit."

"Mustn't expect much profit nowadays, my lad. Come up to the house and have a cup of tea with us."

Gillway hesitated, looking at Di. She was following her father's vanishing figure with loving eyes.

"Shall I come?" Gillway asked gruffly.

"Yes, do," she answered, still watching her father's upright form.

"I don't think I will," he said. "Tell your father that I hope he'll look in upon me to-morrow. Good-afternoon."

An expression of pain crept round Di's lips, and her eyes grew darker.

"Good-bye," she said, with quiet pride; but he had seen the twitching of her beautiful, strong mouth, and felt savagely glad, and yet remorseful, because he owned the power to hurt her.

Di went to The Towers upon Christmas Eve. The Nabob drove over for her, leaving Kitty with her visitors. It had frozen hard for several days, and the skating was exceptionally good upon the ponds in the great park that stretched around The Towers. For the rich, this white, hard winter was delightful; but to the poor, shivering by scanty fires or under thin blankets, the frost and snow and the keen icy wind were cruel and dreaded elements.

"It's going to be a jolly old-fashioned Christmas, Di," said the Nabob joyously. He had tucked Di in well with the costly fur rug, and he had brought a sable-lined cloak of Kitty's for her. She was wrapped up like a helpless baby, and almost unable to stir. She nodded, smiling happily into his gay face.

"I do wish you had come in time to help with the decorations! They're a treat. Heaps of holly and ivy and mistletoe everywhere. I say, it does seem a shame that the old dad's left behind! I shan't half enjoy our festivities for thinking of him all alone, poor old chap! Have you got a pretty ball-gown in that box, Di?"

"I think it is pretty."

"What colour? White, I hope. I always admired you in white in the old days, at Capri, you know."

"It is white," said Di, wishing that her gown had been of any other colour.

The Nabob bent his handsome head, and a tender light shone in his eyes. But Di did not observe it.

"Thank you," said he very softly.

Di turned her face full upon him. There was keen surprise in her clear look.

"For what?" she asked. "Oh—you mustn't think that I remembered that you liked me in white! I didn't. I had quite forgotten it."

"You needn't have told me that you'd forgotten it. Serves me right! I'm a fool!" the Nabob said. He cut the horse sharply with the whip, and Di, in wide-eyed amazement, tried to think what there had been in her words to make him so suddenly angry.

"I didn't even know that you *did* like me in white," said she.

"Oh, you needn't rub it in. Confound that horse! He wants a bit of the devil taken out of him. Ugh! You beast!" There was silence for a few moments as they spun through the clear frosty air; the ground ringing beneath the horse's feet. "Seen Gillway lately?"

"He comes sometimes to see dad," answered Di a little stiffly.

"And sometimes to see you, eh? and now and then you meet him in the fields. You see I know a great deal of your behaviour, Di."

He spoke laughingly, but Di was not in the mood for swift changes. Her lips kept their grave compression.

"That's a fellow that I never can make out. Kitty and he are the greatest friends in the world, you know. He's always at the house. He made himself quite invaluable at hammering up festoons and wreaths yesterday. I wanted him to come to the ball to-night. He wouldn't, though I told him that you were going to stay until Boxing Day."

"I don't quite see why you held out my arrival as a bait to induce Mr. Gillway to come to your ball," said Di. Her nostrils were quivering, and she held her head very high

She had not known that Gillway was a constant visitor at The Towers; had not known that he had met Kitty. Why had he kept silence about the matter? She grew troubled.

"Don't you? Fie, Di! How fierce you are looking—Christmas Eve, too—when everybody is supposed to feel so Christian-like and amiable towards his or her neighbour. I'm afraid you've a bad temper. Let me see," said the Nabob in his pleasantest voice. "What news have I to tell you? Oh, Lady Rivers has arrived, and she's brought a jolly big party with her of ten ladies—poor Kitty was in an awful state of mind when she saw them land in. Kitty has not a decided preference for the society of her sex, a bad little woman! The Joneses have come, and the Duckletts, and Mrs. Caffyn has brought six friends, so you'll meet some old faces again. She's looking wonderfully well—quite young. What a kind-hearted soul she is! She brought Kitty a set of old jewels—diamonds and moonstones, I think Kitty said. She's coming out in 'em to-night."

Di knew the jewels well. They were very valuable and had belonged to her mother's grandmother. Clearly Mrs. Caffyn had decided that Kitty's marriage had turned out well.

"I am glad Kitty has them," said Di. "What a splendid Christmas box!"

The Nabob laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"Splendid?" he repeated in a questioning tone. "That depends very much upon one's own ideas about splendour. I don't suppose these things are very valuable, you know. It is the kind action that makes them so appreciated."

"Oh, but they are worth a lot of money!" exclaimed Di very earnestly. "Aunt told me that they would fetch two thousand pounds now—old jewellery is greatly in demand, you know."

"Indeed!" the Nabob said with a careless inflection in his tones. And Di suddenly remembered that to a man of his vast wealth two thousand pounds would not seem the

large sum that it appeared to her. "I do wish the old dad had come!" he said abruptly, as the dog-cart entered the park gates. "You would have stayed longer if he'd been with you."

"He doesn't get on well with Aunt Caffyn—and with strangers."

"I get on capitally with him!"

"Ah, but you get on well with everybody," said Di with such sincerity in her voice that the Nabob glanced at her and smiled.

Kitty was waiting to receive her sister. She looked prettier than ever in a gown of soft trailing velvet with a lot of old yellow lace about it. She kissed Di warmly, and seemed delighted to see her again. They had not met for several weeks.

"Bernie is so vexed because dad wouldn't come," said she to Di, as she took her to Mrs. Caffyn's room. "He thinks it is all my fault. I don't mind admitting that I *did* hint to the dear old thing that he'd better refuse, because you know, Di, how dreadfully out of place and awkward he would feel. Why, he can't eat properly. I often pity you, darling, though, of course, you are not nearly so sensitive as I am in such matters, or you could never live with him. I think I was right not to let him come, don't you?"

"I'm sure you were. Daddy never once thought of accepting. He feels that your friends can never be his."

"I do wish Bernie would see it in the same light," said Kitty with a deep sigh. "But he can't somehow. He says that it doesn't matter a pin about people's behaviour if the people love you, and he thinks I'm an undutiful daughter. I know he does! But he's the dearest boy in the world; so good to me, you can't think, and sometimes when I feel depressed I'm enough to try the patience of a saint. Bernie never gets cross with me. I really think we love each other more than ever, Di!"

"I am so glad! Marriages ought to be like that, Kitty—all marriages—to be really happy ones."

"Oh, ours is an ideal state of things!" said Kitty. "This is auntie's room. I won't come in. I'll leave you to have a long chat together, and I'll send tea up to you. Then you needn't come down before dinner. Oh, Di!" she exclaimed, throwing her arms round Di's neck. "I could cry with joy at seeing you, dear!"

There was pain in her voice. Di thrilled with sudden apprehension, and looked steadily into her sister's face. Tears were standing upon Kitty's long eyelashes, and her lips quivered.

"Happiness ought not to sadden you," said Di very tenderly. "Is it joy, Kitty?"

"Yes, yes!" Kitty cried, releasing Di with an abrupt kiss. "I always was a silly little goose, wasn't I, Di? Never strong like you, dear. When I'm not laughing I'm crying. I never had any self-control—never! Auntie asked me to send you to her as soon as you came. I shall see you before long, dear."

Di's face was grave as she watched Kitty sit down the broad staircase. The shadow still rested in her eyes when she entered Mrs. Caffyn's room.

"This is quite like old times," said Mrs. Caffyn when they had kissed each other, and Di had removed her outdoor garments.

"What a splendid girl you've grown, Di! Your figure is regal, I declare! I wish Kitty looked as strong as you."

"Kitty looks very well, auntie."

"I don't think she does! She seems overwrought, hysterical—cried when she met me—and can't speak two words unless it is to praise Bernard. Are they happy together, Di? I never could trust Kitty—she is too weak to speak the truth when it is disagreeable—but you are cast in another mould. Tell me!"

"They are very happy. Bernard is devoted to her."

"I know. But Kitty, is she devoted to him?"

"I—I think so. She always speaks lovingly of him."

"Then why is that great farming man—I don't remember



She kissed Di warmly.

his name, but you know who I mean—why is he eternally after her? Yesterday, they were together all the afternoon. Bernard should remonstrate with Kitty. I don't like it."

"Farming man!" repeated Di feebly, and it seemed to her that a knife had entered her heart.

"Yes, a great, tall, dark man, who looks as though he could snap at everybody. He brought a heap of holly for the decorations. Anyone can see that he is in love with Kitty, and she encourages him. How pale you are, child. The room is too warm, perhaps. Open the door."

Di gulped down something that had risen in her throat.

"I don't feel hot," she said steadily.

"Oh, Auntie, what a lovely bracelet!"

Her eyes had fallen upon an open jewel-case. A flashing circlet of green stones laid upon a white plush bed.

"I am glad you like it. I brought it for you, Di. It's my Christmas gift to you. Let me put it on your wrist!"

"It seems too costly for me," said Di, bending to kiss Mrs. Caffyn. Her lips felt stiff; she wondered if they would seem hard and cold to her aunt.

"Not a bit too costly! I intended to give it to you if you had stayed with me. Do you know, I was never so surprised in all my life as I was when Bernard told me that he loved Kitty. I thought he wanted you."

Di laughed, fumbling nervously with the bracelet clasp.

"The proof that I was mistaken was that he married Kitty without a farthing," said Mrs. Caffyn, "and he told me that he had settled fifty thousand pounds upon her! I suppose," she added hesitatingly, "you saw that he loved Kitty?"

"Yes," answered Di, and the falsehood fell easily from her lips.

She wore her bracelet down to dinner, and at the ball that followed. As she was dancing with the Nabob his eyes fell upon it.

"By Jove, Di!" he exclaimed. "You have got a stunning bracelet!"

"Aunt gave it to me—it is my Christmas box."

"I wish she'd given you something else!" he said in a grumbling tone. "I don't mind telling you now. I bought one for you, and its stones are emeralds, too! Let me see if my bracelet is as pretty as hers."

He drew her into the conservatory. It was quite deserted.

"I—I can't take a—bracelet!" Di stammered as the Nabob drew out a leather case from his pocket. Her refusal sounded childish in her own ears. "It sounds ungrateful," she added desperately, "and unkind, but, indeed, I'd rather not take it."

"Oh, why not?" he asked coldly, fixing his eyes upon her face, and as she remained silent and embarrassed, he added: "Surely there can be no harm in my offering my wife's sister a trifling present. Why, when I was married I had to give brooches to every one of Kitty's bridesmaids, the confoundest ugliest girls I've ever seen—four of 'em, too!"

"I don't see what that has to do with your offering me a present."

"I wanted to show you that there was nothing extraordinary in it, that's all. Let me see how it looks on, Di," he said, and took her pretty gloved arm. "Don't refuse it. Did I ever set up my back at one kind, sisterly action of yours when I was at the farm? You know I didn't. It will be unkind to refuse me this pleasure, Di."

"I wish——" Di began. The Nabob fastened the bracelet upon her wrist, holding it out beneath the light that fell from a hanging lamp. The great emeralds flashed and glittered like green fires. In spite of that strange shrink-



The Nabob fastened the bracelet upon her wrist.

ing from accepting the trinket, a faint cry of admiration fell from her lips.

"It's a bigger one than Mrs. Caffyn's," said the Nabob with boyish exultation. "And I'm glad it is! I wanted to give you the best present you'd ever had, Di! I shall never forget how good you were to Kitty and me, when we were with you, you dear old girl!"

Further words of refusal died upon Di's lips. The brotherly affection in the Nabob's eyes was unmistakable. She felt ashamed of her hesitation and lack of generosity.

"It is too beautiful, Bernard," she stammered. "Just think—I shall never have an opportunity of wearing it, unless it is when I am visiting you."

He was still holding her arm. Suddenly he dropped it with a low exclamation, and Di, following the direction of his eyes, saw a face pressed against the glass. She started, and became as white as her dress.

"It's Gillway!" cried the Nabob. He hurried to the door, and, opening it, called Gillway's name several times. A rush of cold air entered the conservatory, and a few dead

leaves, but the sole answer was the moaning complaint of a shrill wind.

Closing the door, the Nabob returned to Di, looking at her with suspicious surprise in his frank face.

"What a rum chap!" he exclaimed. "What could make him bolt like that? Anyone would think that he was anxious not to be seen."

"Perhaps it was not he," said Di.

"Oh, yes, it was. By George! if I thought he was

"To-morrow, if you like—Christmas Day."

"Do!" said Mrs. Caffyn. "It is a charming idea of yours, Bernard."

"You mustn't give praise where it isn't due. Lady Rivers is responsible for the suggestion."

"Why, she said *you* proposed it, Bernie!" exclaimed Kitty.

"Oh, that's her modest way of putting things," said the Nabob. "I thought from her anxiety to get up the party that she'd got a new set of furs she was anxious to show off. There she is. Excuse me, Kitty. I'll tell her that it is settled for to-morrow night—half-past nine, eh?"

The ball did not break up until long after the Christmas bells had announced to the listening white world that Christmas Day had dawned. Di could not sleep when she was alone in her room. She was tormented with thoughts of John Gillway and Kitty.

Had Gillway prowled about the grounds in the hope of meeting Kitty? And did the Nabob suspect? Di shivered, thinking of the jealous light in the Nabob's face when he had hunted in the ballroom for Kitty.

In spite of his light disposition, there was a deal of latent strength in the lower part of the young man's face. He would be a match for Gillway in physical courage if they met—and here Di's terror and anxiety and the throbbing pain at her heart increased. Dared she speak to Kitty? Had she the right? And so, tortured with fear for the consequences of Kitty's imprudence—for Di was confident that Kitty's love of admiration, and probably a coquettish desire to win Gillway back, constituted the whole of her wrong-doing—Di paced her room through the hours of the sluggish winter morning, and tried to make herself believe that she was only hurt and disappointed because Kitty still flirted.

Christmas Day appeared hard and white and rimy, and there was feasting and merry-making in the great house. The Nabob dispensed his hospitality with generous hand. In the servants' hall a large number of poor people were given meat and bread and pudding, and there was a Christmas tree for the children, laden with gifts of warm clothing, toys, and sweets.

"What a good fellow he is!" Mrs. Caffyn exclaimed to Di, when the happy, noisy troop of ruddy-faced children had been sent home laden with their treasures.

"Indeed he is!" cried Di heartily. "He has given such a lot of soup and blankets away this winter. I—I didn't know it," she added in a half-ashamed tone, "until the vicar told me of it just now. He says that he has never had so generous a parishioner!"

"Such men ought to be rich," said Mrs. Caffyn. "They do so much good!"

She glanced at the Nabob as he stood at the end of the hall by the rifled Christmas tree. He had been the gayest of the gay, and had joined in the children's games, seemingly as indefatigable as they. His fair wavy hair was disordered with his romps with the little ones, his eyes sparkled with animation and kindness. He looked vigorous and handsome with youth and strength.

"Oh, Di!" whispered Mrs. Caffyn, "I do hope that Kitty will make him happy!" and Di's heart echoed the aspiration.

The night was crisp and cuttlingly cold when the skating party left the house for the fishpond in the park. All the guests had turned out, and nearly all the men servants had been utilised as torch-bearers. The flaming yellow-red lights threw warm patches of flame colour upon the snow as the procession made its way over the stiff, frozen grass to the water, and pretty eyes grew brighter and cheeks rosier in the ruddy glow.

"Let us have a spin together," said the Nabob to Di. "You only gave me three dances last night."

She smiled at him, excited by the novelty of her



Neither of them spoke.

after—No—it's impossible! Let me take you back to the ballroom, Di. I must see Kitty—I mean I am engaged to her for the next dance."

They returned to the ballroom, making the tour of the big room. Kitty was sitting with Mrs. Caffyn. She smiled lovingly at her husband as he approached her. Di glanced from Kitty's pretty smiling face to the Nabob's stern, cold features. He looked angry and jealous, Di thought.

"Bernie," said Kitty, "what have you been saying to Lady Rivers about a skating party by torch-light?"

The Nabob passed one hand over his face as though he knew that he looked disturbed and was anxious to conceal his emotion from Kitty.

"Oh, nothing," he answered lightly, and now he smiled, looking his own, gay, pleasant self again. "She thought it would be fun, so I said I'd think about it. What do you say, Kitty? Would it be a bother, or would you like it?"

"It would be lovely," cried Kitty, clasping her hands. "Delightful! We ought to have it as soon as possible, in case this delicious weather changes."

surroundings, and impressed with the ghostly appearance of the white-armed trees, and the keen-eyed, twinkling stars that looked down so searchingly upon the merry party.

The spin was a long one. Round and round the gleam-



She was languidly brushing her hair.

ing ice-bound pond they went, hand in hand, Di's long fur boa fluttering in the Nabob's face, and the perfume from the violets at her throat reaching his nostrils from time to time.

Neither of them spoke. The stillness of the white park, with its big spreading trees and air of mystery, seemed to have fallen upon them and wrapped them in its silence. On and on they glided, the Nabob's eyes fixed upon the girl's profile, and hers dreamily looking at the glittering sky. Bursts of laughter fell from other skaters as they sped past them; little cries of real or affected alarm, shrill giggles and screams; but Di and her companion appeared deaf to all sounds. It was as though they were floating alone in the ghostly-looking world, enveloped and caressed by its weird quietude.

"Di," whispered the Nabob softly.

She turned her face. He smiled, and in her contentment and happiness she returned the smile.

"I wish we could go on like this for ever and ever," said he. "Do you?"

She nodded, looking away at the stars with a strange sensation of unreality creeping over her. Kitty passed them, laid her hand upon Di's arm, and stopped her.

"Auntie's getting tired of it," she grumbled, "and she's got a hot water-bottle, too. She shouldn't have come if she can't skate. She wants to go home."

"What a prosaic young woman you are, Kitty," said her husband. "We can't let Mrs. Caffyn go home yet. I'll find a chair and take her on the ice."

As Di stood near the edge of the pond watching the animated crowd, a passing torch-bearer threw a red light upon the face of a man who stood at a little distance from the skaters.

It was John Gillway. Di's first impulse was to join him. Why was he watching the Nabob's guests? Was he anxious to see Kitty? Had his passion for her revived? When Di looked in the same direction, the man had vanished, and though she kept a watchful eye upon the assembled people, she failed to see him again.

The skating-party did not return to the house until morning had dawned, and then half-an-hour was spent over hot coffee and brandy. A little clock in Di's room struck three as she began to undress. She felt weary and depressed.

The thought of returning to her father that day was strangely pleasant.

She was languidly brushing her hair when a hurried knock came at the door. Mrs. Caffyn's voice, shrill with alarm, cried: "Di! Di! Let me in!"

Her face was haggard; her hair in disorder when Di admitted her. She still wore the long fur cloak that she had enveloped herself in for the excursion. It hung by one string around her neck.

"I've been robbed!" she gasped, stretching out an empty jewel case.

"Robbed! Oh, Auntie!"

"Look," cried Mrs. Caffyn. "I found the case like this when I went to put away my diamond brooch. Everything has been taken from the safe!" and while Di was staring at the case she added excitedly: "The bracelet I gave you, child; have you got it?"

Di opened the drawer in which she had placed both bracelets, with the few trinkets that she had brought with her. An exclamation fell from Mrs. Caffyn's lips as she bent eagerly forward and watched Di open the boxes. Like her own, they were all empty.

And as the two women stood staring into each other's pallid features a shrill cry rang from the room occupied by Lady Rivers, and the next moment the sound of a bell being frantically pulled followed the scream.

"She has lost her emeralds!" cried Mrs. Caffyn. Di followed her from the room, carrying the rifled bracelet cases.

(To be continued.)

A Pump in a Church.

THE most extraordinary tomb to be seen in Great Britain is in the chancel of Newbiggin Parish Church, Cumberland. It commemorates a former squire, and is in the form of a pump. Originally this quaint tomb was simply erected as a monument, but water has been laid on, and in case of fire in the church the pump would serve a most useful purpose. You will find further interesting particulars about this remarkable tomb, together with an illustration, in this week's *Sunday Reader*.

Among other contents of *The Sunday Reader* may be mentioned, "Advertising on a Pulpit," "A Distress Signal at a Bazaar," "Preaching to a Cannibal King," "Children with Royal God-parents," "A Postponed Wedding," "Sleeping in a Church," two complete stories, and a serial.

Five thousand rewards are being offered by the editor, and any reader can secure one of these. Go right away and get a copy of the *The Sunday Reader* at once.

A DIVERSION OF FATE.

At the upper end of the village, near where the road stretched away in an endless white spiral to the far line of the great mountains, the village folk were crowding together before a little open space.

Apart from them, on the broad verandah near by, Dinsmore Sahib and his two guests lounged easily in their chairs. A swarthy, six-foot Indian servant moved softly about with a tray of cooling drinks.

Before them, naked, save for the loin-cloth, and looking like a shining bronze statue, was one of those travelling conjurers whose art is the despair of Occidentals. He was about to conclude a remarkable performance with the time-honoured basket-trick, which may be as old as India itself.

"Yes; it's an old trick, but a good one," Dinsmore was saying. "I can never help the chill in my bones while the thing's going on, though it always turns out all right."

"Why, where's the danger? It's done with a false bottom to the basket, isn't it?"

"It is often done in that way," Dinsmore admitted, "but in this case the woman is trained to throw herself quickly from side to side to avoid the sword-thrusts which are made in regular order."

"Whew! hot work, isn't it?" said the first guest, while the other asked curiously: "How can you tell?"

"Oh, I got it from my servant, and he from the woman there," returned Dinsmore with a significant look.

A woman now came forward from beneath a clump of fig-trees. She was scarcely more clothed than the man, and her plump brown body, the arms and ankles heavy with bangles, her red lips and the scarlet flowers in her hair, with the bit of soft blue drapery about her, made a picture good to look on. As she moved quietly to the man's side her eyes caught those of the native on the verandah, and for a moment warmth and light flashed into her impassive face, but at the conjurer's words she turned away.

"Sahib," he said, addressing Dinsmore as he drew the light basket into position, "you shall see how one punishes the woman who gives him cause for anger." He bent a fierce gaze on his assistant, and her violent trembling scarcely seemed assumed.

This was the conventional patter of the trick, but one of the Englishmen stirred uneasily in his chair. "Good Heavens, how completely the woman is at his mercy! Just by a slip of the memory he might slice her into ribbons before he could stop himself."

At a gesture from the conjurer, who stood leaning on his long keen sword, the woman removed her many bangles, and stood with downcast eyes before him.

"Now, thou unhappy one," he said slowly. The woman winced, but stepped submissively into the basket, the lid of which closed on her a moment later.

The conjurer drew a few paces away, then, panting with fierce cries to enhance the effect of his harmless assault, made a mad rush towards the basket, thrusting his sword through the sides, up and down, with great rapidity. Each thrust was greeted with piteous cries from within, and the sword appeared to drip with blood.

It was truly a nerve-shaking performance. The audience hardly breathed, despite the full faith in the swordsman's dexterity; even the servant of Dinsmore Sahib turned a queer ash colour as he stood in the doorway with the forgotten drinks.

At last the conjurer stopped for breath, the perspiration streaming down his shining sides. He caught the eye of Dinsmore Sahib's servant as he stood there, and in an instant the fire which had smouldered at his heart all day broke into sudden flame. Since they had come into the hill-country the woman had been like one possessed; since she had seen, four days ago, the sahib's green-turbaned, monkey-faced Mohammedan yonder, she had spared but a look to her rightful lord. One careless thrust with this keen-edged weapon would end the jealous tortures he had endured since they left the plains.

Her discarded bracelets mocked him, and he swore no man should feel those soft brown arms around the neck but he.

She must be lying on the left side; instead of moving to the right, he would pierce the basket on the left from cover to bottom. It would be but an accident, they would all agree—all except the Mohammedan. He balanced the sword carefully in his hands and blood danced before his eyes as he took a step forward.

In a sudden he fell to trembling so that he dared not trust his hand to strike. He thought again of the warm brown arms that slid about his neck, of the soft red lips that were laid against his, of the eyes that had followed him even before he bought her. This hill-country bewitched one—he would take her back to the plains again. An accident could happen there as well as here, if necessary.

But to finish the trick.

Ah! was she on the left side, after all? What had been his last thrust? His heated brain could only turn the moves over confusedly; he could arrive at no decision. It was surely the left—or the right?

He prayed for a miracle to clear his muddled brain. He swore by all his gods he had not meant to hurt a hair of the woman's head. In thought he already felt the sword slipping hideously through her flesh.

The spectators moved impatiently, forcing the conjurer to action. Left—right? It should rest with Fate.

"Sahibs, this shall end it!" he said in husky tones, and made a terrible lunge. A series of heart-rending shrieks, dying away in groans, was the immediate response.

This was the usual conclusion of the performance, but the sequence was unexpected. The cover of the basket was thrown violently back, and the woman crept out, to throw herself at the conjurer's feet.

"Oh, my lord; it was in thy heart to slay thy miserable servant, yet thou didst stay thy hand. My life is thine once more."

"It was Fate," said the conjurer slowly, but he did not explain to the woman.

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Answers to - - Correspondents.

Short Stories dated June 5th will contain an inset of a particularly interesting nature. It will consist of a clear and brief description of the aims and objects of the **FRESH AIR FUND**, and will also form in itself a collecting sheet for those who may care to either collect for themselves or get other people to collect for them. Make it a point to see first of all that you get this inset when you buy your next copy of *S.S.*, for if you don't, it will be your loss. In the event of it having by some manner or means slipped out before the number reaches your hands, I shall be pleased to send along a duplicate on receipt of a post-card.

S. K.—You should certainly remove your pipe, cigar, or cigarette from your mouth when you meet a lady of your acquaintance in the street. It is not the correct thing for a gentleman to invariably raise his hat with his right hand, but with whichever hand is farthest from the lady passing him.

CYCLIST.—The best way to prevent your lamp from smoking is to soak the wick in vinegar for several hours and then allow it to dry.

MRS. A.—Most of the eggs you see offered for sale at very low prices come from the North of Italy.

G. P. P.—No; a medical man has never been raised to the ranks of the peerage. Thursday is the publishing day for our new paper, *Girls*.

B. S.—Duelling was most prevalent in this country during the reign of George III. If you wish for a reply to your letter by post you should inclose a stamped and addressed envelope.

G. J.—The custom of eating apple sauce with roast pork is not a mere matter of taste, but the acid of the apple assists materially in the digestion of the pork.

R. S.—Why not look in the library of the British Museum for the book you are in search of? It is almost certain to be there. No fewer than 31,000 books are added to this wonderful collection every year.

D. T. E.—The Bank of England was started in 1694, and the system of penny postage in 1840.

H. L. W.—The custom of shaking hands is a sign of friendship and trust. I do not agree with you in the opinion that it is a ridiculous practice. Every nation must have its form of greeting, and surely it is preferable to offer one's hand to a friend than to rub noses with them as some races do—the Maoris of New Zealand, for instance.

MUSICIAN.—The pipes similar to those played by Punch and Judy men is the most ancient form of musical instrument; it has been used from the very earliest days of the world's history.

W. L. is very much in love, but being of a bashful nature, cannot summon up sufficient courage to propose to the object of his affection. A brilliant idea occurred to him, namely, to use the language of flowers as a medium, and he writes to ask me what would be the most suitable flower to send to the lady?—A moss rosebud with a piece of myrtle is generally considered to be equivalent to a confession of love, but if you take my advice, you will go yourself and make a bold declaration of your passion. Believe me, the lady will be much more likely to look with favour upon your suit than if approached in a timid and faint-hearted fashion.

A. M. H.—I am surprised to hear how much your dog appreciates music, most of the dogs of my acquaintance have a decided aversion to it, which they exhibit audibly.

W. N.—There are eighteen flags used at sea, by which it is possible to make 78,642 signals.

D. Y.—It is quite true that the smoke from the wick of a candle after the flame has been extinguished is poisonous, and if breathed in great quantities it would cause death.

M. B. L.—No; the negro is not black when first born, but a yellowish white. It gradually becomes darker, however, until by the time it is ten days old it is quite black.

G. C. M.—Foolscap is so called because paper of that size was originally marked with a jester's cap and bells.

V. V. V.—Divan is a Persian word. Your friend is quite right. It means a collection, a council, an audience chamber, and so came to mean a couch or sofa, from the kind of cushioned seats which in an Eastern reception room are ranged against the wall.

G. F. B.—It would take about a pound of cork to float a man of eleven stone.

ANNOYED writes: "Every year on a certain day in July I cannot venture into the streets of our town without being confronted on every hand by a group of dirty little street children presiding over a collection of oyster-shells, and thrusting one of them in my face they request me to 'remember the grotto.' Is this a peculiarity of Otley, or are you pestered in the same way in London?"—It is quite a universal practice, and arises from a former custom amongst pilgrims of visiting a shrine of the Apostles at Compostilla on St. James' Day, to "remember the grotto" being to help the poor and needy. There was also a supervision that whoever ate oysters on that day would never want for money.

ELLA.—It is correct for the bridesmaids to follow the bride after the wedding ceremony from the church in the same order as they entered it, the custom for each of them to have a gentleman attendant having long been abandoned.

H. R.—William the Conqueror is credited with the invention of surnames; each man took his name from his particular trade or calling.

EMEL.—Three feet six inches is indeed a remarkable length for a woman's hair. Yes, I have heard of a few instances of a still greater length, one, for example, being over six feet, and another over seven. Thirty inches is the mean length.

C. R.—The total weight of all the excavated diamonds in the world does not exceed five tons.

H. H.—If a person says, "I beg your pardon," it is much better to say "Don't mention it" than "Granted." The latter expression infers a wrong has been done and is forgiven.

D. L. M.—Yes; there is one—and only one—animal that does not swim instinctively, and that is the camel; immediately it enters the water it turns over on its back and dies.

A. G. S.—"Facetious" and "Abstemious" are the only words in the English language that contain the five vowels in their numerical order.

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H. J. D.—Dogs were formerly used for drawing small carts, etc., in England, but the practice was prohibited by an Act of Parliament, some fifty years ago.

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